

JOHN L.
LEWIS
Leader of Labor

CECIL CARNES

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JOHN L. LEWIS
LEADER OF LABOR



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BY
CECIL CARNES



ROBERT SPELLER
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New York

JOHN L. LEWIS: LEADER OF LABOR

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First Edition.

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TO
MOTHER AND BETTY



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CECIL CARNES.

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JOHN L. LEWIS
LEADER OF LABOR

Chapter One

TWENTY-SIX YEARS BEGINNING

1875-1906

MINING HAS RARELY been carried on except by pioneers or slaves. It is an occupation that almost literally rests upon geologic strata which was in formation when physical force and the survival of the fittest were the prime laws of nature.

Consequently its workers are known to possess more primitive force than any other group of toilers in the world. It is natural that this be true for the myriad roots of the industry delve too deeply into the earth for it to be otherwise.

And so it is that the miner must be compensated for the risks he takes and for those things he loses in not being able to live in better surroundings; or he must be kept at his task by oppression or taking advantage of his handicaps. Illiteracy, political subjugation or economic chains can hold him beneath the earth, just as the shackles of Cortez and Pizarro kept Mexican Indians at silver veins.

The sociological conditions mankind knew, if mankind existed, when coal was formed twenty million years ago, turn up again when coal is brought from the bowels of the earth, for mining is a crude business.

In Wales, sixty years ago, at a time when miners were born and not made, son succeeding father in the endless

pits of coal and ignorance, Thomas Lewis resolved that he would not be a slave. For hundreds of years his family had developed broad backs and dug boggy graves in the pits. Those others had accepted that life as their fate, but Thomas was a thinker.

He had heard of the fortunes to be made in Australia and America, and so in 1875 he set out. He went to Australia first, but when conditions there were less favorable than he had thought they should be, he left for America. He knew that many of his countrymen had settled in Lucas, Iowa, and had written glowing accounts of their working conditions and their homes in the United States.

Arriving at San Francisco, he found work for short periods at various towns until he arrived at Lucas. There he was welcomed into the councils of the miners, who taught him English and took him to the White Breast Fuel Company offices, where he was immediately given a job.

It was at about this same time that the Watkins family decided to leave Wales. Their daughter Louisa looked just a trifle askance about settling in another mining community, reasoning that since they were going to the land of opportunity they might just as well chuck the old mode of life and she insisted that the head of the family get employment at something easier than mining.

But Mr. Watkins could not shake the coal dust from his trouser cuffs that easily. There was the habit of years. It was the only occupation he knew, and besides his friends in Lucas, Iowa, were the only people in all America he felt he could count on. So after taking his family past the immigration authorities in New York, he led them to Iowa.

Lucas' five thousand or so people knew mining as their main means of livelihood, and Watkins was soon deep in mine pits and politics.

For in America everything was different. The very air above ground reeked with liberty. Men sometimes did lawless things, just to demonstrate that they owed allegiance to no one. And they combined to show their employer the massive fist of the Knights of Labor.

The old customs were not easily shaken off, and old memories are mellow, so there were many community gatherings where the songs of Wales were sung and much good Scotch whiskey was disposed of. It was at such a festive meeting that Thomas Lewis met Louisa Watkins.

From that time on Thomas had two loves, Louisa and the Knights of Labor. He wedded both. Just before he exchanged vows, in 1878, with Miss Watkins, it was discovered that they were second cousins.

They went to live in one of the typical mining houses of the community, and on February 12, 1880, John L. Lewis was born.

He was an ordinary child, extremely masculine in all his habits and possessing a very decided tendency to have things his own way. The early conversations he overheard were practically restricted to what was going on at the mines or at the union headquarters. It was natural, that with the new freedom, his father should talk about how bewildering things were, how different from the old, and what a marvelous life was ahead for them.

If one was dissatisfied with what went on here in America, one could always resist, the elder Lewis said, over and over again. And resist the miners did, when in

1882 the operators decided to take advantage by a cheap ruse.

In those days the miners were not paid by the day or the tonnage which they actually mined, but on that tonnage which was of such size that it would not fall through a series of screens set at the bottom of chutes leading to the "tipples" or "breakers," whence the coal departed towards its consumer. So the operators mined considerable tonnage that they did not pay for. They believed that by increasing the size of the screens an inch or so they could greatly increase this easy money.

The miners found, however, that it was mostly a case of much screening out and little screening in so far as their pocketbooks were concerned.

They struck, and at the age of two, John L. Lewis, who was to become president of the United Mine Workers of America and the most powerful and resourceful union leader in the world, came into contact with the violent aspect of labor relations.

The fighting spirit of the House of Lewis showed itself during that strike, for Thomas was placed on the blacklist of all the Lucas operators. Even though he knew he could not be employed after the strike was adjusted, the elder Lewis stayed and fought it out. Then while others went back to work under the new conditions, with a satisfied smile on his face, Thomas moved his family and few belongings to Colfax, Iowa. By this time his second son, Thomas, Jr., had been born.

Colfax was a small town and news traveled slowly, so Mr. Lewis was able to work in the mines for a time before the word came that he was "a radical, a unionist, and on a blacklist at Lucas." After that he worked as a night

watchman. He still believed, however, that unions were the only answer to a workingman's troubles. When the inactivity of being a caretaker palled upon him, he moved again to a nearby mining village, where he worked for a short period and was finally doomed to move on because of his ideas on collective bargaining.

Des Moines, capital of the state, was the next home of the wandering Lewis family. There in 1889, A. D. Lewis was born. Young John had started in school in Lucas, just had time to erase the Lucas scrawlings off his slate in Colfax, and had been put under a third teacher's care in Des Moines. He was fighting and thoroughly whipping boys much older than himself. Evenings would find him walking with his father to the establishment where the elder Lewis was employed as a night watchman.

A short time later John's father was added to the Des Moines police force. But he missed the unions and the weekly gatherings of his clannish countrymen, so when they wrote him that new operators were taking over the fields and tearing up old blacklists he was glad.

Howard Lewis was born in 1893, and in 1894 Hattie swelled the family ranks to six children. John L. had left school at the seventh grade in order to help provide for the needs of the others. By the time that the blacklist was finally removed and his father was enabled to return to Lucas in 1897, John looked forward to working in the mines.

Back in his native town at seventeen, John L. was easily a leader among the younger people. While his formal education had not progressed, he had read voraciously. He looked ahead and planned. He was willing to work and he had courage.

He had a leonine head, as impressive as it was massive. He was unassuming, but confident, and he knew he must rely on more than his nearly six feet of very efficient body. He rarely smiled. There was too much wrong with the world, but just yet he could not talk about it. He must prepare himself.

He went to work in the mines, along with his father. Presently his brother Thomas joined them.

At that time working conditions in the mines were not nearly as favorable they are now. There were no safety laws whatever. None of the present ventilation measures were in effect and the miner was forced to perform half of his day's work among powder fumes. The ten and eleven-hour day was in effect and \$1.60 was considered a good daily wage.

With many safety laws in effect the industry today takes the lives of thousands of workers every year. In 1897 conditions were such that every man of even nascent intellect became a militant unionist. John L. Lewis began to study the underlying causes. He traced much of the trouble to plain, unadulterated greed on the part of the operators, much of the remainder to fear or apathy on the part of labor. He resolved that he would dedicate his life to improve the lot of the miners. He became faithful and fair to what he wanted to achieve, rather than to the person of his opponent. He decided to win first and be fair afterwards and to hell with the smaller issues. It was the main objective of better working standards, hours and wages that became of importance and not particularly how they were achieved. He realized that his father and himself and those about him were coolies, and worse, for sometimes coolies work above ground and can see death approaching.

A driving realist who had a vision of what the ideal could be like, John L. Lewis soon got in a state where he never was satisfied with things he saw about him. When mention was made of living conditions, he would blacken like a thunder head. There never was anything wishy-washy about him. He moved like a steam roller and other miners seemed to enjoy hearing him roar. When he was angry he resembled a taunted bull in his actions.

His jaw became the most prominent landmark in Lucas. It must have been after seeing such a man that the scribe set down that famous line about discretion being the better part of valor.

Samson must have looked like him. His bushy eyebrows, black as the coal he mined, his great bulk, powerful voice, even his uncontrollable hair fitted the description. And, once again, the only softening influences in his life were the women in it.

John ran a debating society after his work in the mines was over, and he managed a baseball team. At many of these functions he would meet Myrta Edith Bell, who was kindly, slim, pretty and the most intelligent young girl in town. She was talking of going to normal school and becoming a teacher. Although she never pointed it out to the Lucas people, who were mostly late immigrants, Miss Bell could trace her family in America back to those hectic days just before the American Revolution. She was the oldest daughter of a doctor, who, when she was ten, had moved his family to Iowa from Ohio.

Though John L. was uncultured, she suggested material for him to read, loaned him books and applauded when he sponsored shows at the town Opera House. She became a school teacher at eighteen and continued to guide the budding leader of labor in his studies.

John's popularity grew at the same time as his muscles and his intellect. He was thewed like an aurochs, yet gentle with women. He could bellow a crowd into submission and then sway them with an extemporaneous speech of carefully chosen words, ranging the full strength of his vocal chords, which rivaled those of the late Caruso in power. When he wanted to be he was a fighter and an actor.

He became, by some sort of general mutual consent, a Justice of the Peace. But he never tried any cases. Most Lucas litigation wore off in fist fights. Later on he ran a mill for a short time.

He was already longing to know something of the world about him. In 1900 another son, Raymond, was born to Thomas and Louisa Lewis.

The next year John decided, at twenty-one, to travel. He had always thought he was destined for something a little better than the other boys who worked at his side in the mines, and prompted by a real desire to help them by becoming a better equipped man, he started to wander throughout the West.

He worked and studied conditions in the copper mines of Colorado and the copper, silver and coal mines in Montana. He encountered strikes and saw how they were conducted; he spent long evenings setting down what he had learned and in several places was of great assistance in organizing unions. He worked in one or two gold mines, too.

In one of these mines there was a vicious old mule named Spanish Pete. This bit of living leather from Hell tried several times to kill the youthful miner from Lucas. One day he caught him against the wall of a mine corridor

and began the attack. John knocked the mule down with a mighty blow of his fist and the gust of a blasphemous prayer.

That old mule came back for more. To save his life, John L. wrested the sprag of a coal car and brained Spanish Pete. His life saved, he turned to saving his job. Stuffing the mule's mortal wounds with clay, John told the foreman old Pete had dropped dead on the job.

It was a rough and ready world he lived in, full of hard knocks. It served, for it was hard as emery, to polish him. He found that it was not just in Lucas, but throughout the country, that labor needed direction. Some of the things he saw might have set other highly gifted persons to an ineffectual pawing at the gates of idealism. But John L. Lewis had to live up to that craggy chin which told the world that here was a scrapper and a realist.

It was while he was wandering that his parents wrote to tell him in 1903 of the birth of a new sister, Edith.

In 1905 he was working in Hannah, Wyoming, when the great disaster took place there, and 400 miners were killed. He was not working at the mine where the accident occurred, but the incident made a lasting impression upon him. He added many pertinent facts to his list of laws that must be secured for the benefit of the men who toil below the earth's surface.

It may have been thoughts of the girl he had left behind that sent him back to Lucas in 1906. It is certain that he realized he could now serve his mining colleagues with a greater understanding of what other miners were facing or had won by unionization than he could have previously. He was ready to bring all his talents to the firing line.

Chapter Two

A LEADER EMERGING

1906–November, 1918

“I NOMINATE JOHN L. LEWIS!”

The youth on the upturned carbide can shouted the words and there was a rumble of approval. It was nomination and election by acclamation. John L. Lewis, twenty-six years of age, was called upon to speak. He did, giving the miners the platitudes labor leaders had set down before him. But it was an earnest speech and it showed that the man who gave it was worthy of the job he had won: delegate of a Lucas mine to the national convention of the United Mine Workers of America.

Tom Lewis' oldest boy had finally achieved a tangible result from his studies of English literature, history, economics and philosophy. He was on the way up. Ringing in his ears was a phrase he would hear repeated hundreds of times in every corner of his great country.

“. . . nominate John L. Lewis.”

Now definitely a labor leader, if only in a small way, John L. buckled down to consideration of coal problems from every angle. Just as he mastered everything he ever set out to do, he was destined to become the recognized expert of the nation in this field of mining, the industry on which American prosperity is based.

But always there would be a few minutes for a tête-à-

tête with Miss Myrta Edith Bell. These little meetings became more and more necessary, and culminated in their marriage on June 5, 1907.

His wife now gave up teaching school and devoted herself to helping her husband further his career.

In the belief that he could better himself elsewhere, John L. investigated conditions in nearby fields. But he moved slowly, realizing that since he was married he could no longer work anywhere his fancy took him.

He decided that one of the main reasons for periodic unemployment in the coal mining industry was the fact that the railroads were sponsoring the operation of marginal mines, not economically sound, by granting lower freight rates. It was his belief that the railroad companies were doing this in order to further develop tributary lines for themselves. He gave the matter a great deal of study and put it high up on the list of things that some day he would change.

Then an opening came for him at Panama, Illinois, in 1909. There in the Montgomery County coal fields he enjoyed great popularity and the union leaders decided he was a "comer." They saw to it that he was elected president of his mine local, named as a one-man "pit committee," and at a convention in 1910, elected state legislative agent.

Using the object lesson of the recent Cherry disaster, which took 160 lives in a Northern Illinois mine explosion and fire, John L. Lewis went before the Illinois legislature and made such an impassioned plea that he won many safety measures for the industry's workers.

His eyes blazed as he described the horrors in mine disasters. To say that he was pugnacious is understate-

ment. It is to use restraint, which he did not. He almost dared the law-makers to vote against his bill. He pounded their furniture until the halls rang and his huge fists were blue. It was with relief that the solons gave him his law and even another. This was an industrial compensation law which he had noted in passing would be a very good thing and had been needed a long time. It still benefits Illinois workingmen and their families.

On top of his victory in lobbying, Mr. Lewis was elated by the birth of a daughter, Margaret Mary.

All this time the fighting union representative was building up his following. Politics were plain to him and he set out deliberately to get what he wanted. Voting was done through the mail, so he built up a huge correspondence. It was recorded that in 1911, as a convention delegate, he beat President John P. White on an important issue. He was cheered resoundingly by the membership. This was history. The next man to get in his path was Duncan McDonald, head of the Illinois Miners' Union, and no one seems to remember what either issue was since both have long since been dead, but Mr. Lewis beat him, also.

There was only one word for him. Dynamic.

It was impossible to ignore him anywhere. Platforms trembled when he mounted them and he always timed his entrance like an actor, then executed it with the combined effect of active siege howitzers, a sound of massed bands and the entrance of an emperor into his court. The President of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, had heard of him and finally appointed him Field and Legislative Representative of the Federation in 1911.

His daughter, Kathryn, was born April 14th of that year.

He began organizing the steel industry, and those of rubber, glass, lumber, and copper. He spent five and a half years roaming nearly all of the United States in this work. All that time he was improving himself and consolidating his position within the organization of the United Mine Workers of America.

He did special persuasive jobs at several state capitals, and won new legislation; he aided in the Calumet copper strike, striking out with all his fury and finesse. He carried on when the rubber workers struck at Akron, Ohio. He was cheered everywhere he went, and as victory piled upon victory his fame became mythical. Without so much as a notice in any New York newspaper all this time, the remainder of the country, which after all is the important part, knew much of him that was fact and reams more that was fiction. People came to hear him talk who had never been interested in labor and came away convinced that he stood for everything good.

Others heard that he ate three helpings of raw beefsteak each breakfast, then shouted on street corners for followers to help him throw bricks at capitalists and capitols.

He was chairman of the organizers who tried to make a closed shop of the steel industry in 1913. But he was wise enough to call it off when the full force of the depression of that year became felt. A part of his activities embraced legislative work in Washington for the Federation. He used each of these opportunities to further enhance his chances in getting the right mail when he stepped out in a test of strength in the United Mine Workers of America, which he knew was coming.

And so it came about that in 1916 he served as a member of the Interstate Scale Committee. But his climax of triumphs was reached when in the same year he served as

chairman pro tem of the national convention of the United Mine Workers.

Of course he made a fine impression. His fiery denunciations of the enemies of labor, and enemies of the miners in particular, made the membership sit up. Notice was taken of him by President John P. White, regardless of the fact there were unpleasant memories of the instance when John L. thought he should oppose his president. Mr. White shortly thereafter named Mr. Lewis chief statistician of the union.

Mr. Lewis' rapid rise as a real factor in the labor and economic status of the nation can well be illustrated by the fact that it was not until 1917 that the New York newspapers mentioned him—and then they misspelled his name. The usually accurate *New York Times* called him James Lewis but they had his address right; Springfield, Illinois.

When officials of the United Mine Workers of America demanded that the union be represented at a general conference of coal operators with the Coal Commission of the National Defense Council, Mr. Lewis was selected. The meeting opened in Washington, D. C., on June 26, 1917, with members of the Council's Committee, Mr. Lewis and four hundred of the large mine operators attending.

The coal producers promised to sell their product at fair prices since that was the only alternative to government operation.

A typical newspaper report of the meeting said, in part: "While the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce was today considering the Pomerene Bill, one of the seven measures before Congress providing for Government operation of the coal mines officials of the Government were

sweeping off their feet with patriotic appeals the bituminous and anthracite coal operators of the country assembled in conference to agree to voluntary pooling of their industry in the interest of the nation.

"The 400 operators present representing the great fields of both bituminous and anthracite pledged themselves to sell their products at a fair and reasonable price to be fixed with the approval of the National Defense Council's Coal Committee, by the commitments of seven producers from each coal mining State.

"These special committees were also authorized to confer with the Defense Council's Committee to the end that production be stimulated and plans be perfected to provide advantageous means of distribution.

"The action, in the form of a formal resolution, was adopted after an all-day session opened by Secretary of the Interior, Franklin T. Lane. Secretary of the Navy, Joseph T. Daniels, also spoke.

"James Lewis of Springfield, Ill., representing the United Mine Workers of America, said the miners' union did not believe the time had come for the Government to take control of the coal industry. He said the miners believed the question of wages and working conditions could best be worked out by the representatives of the miners and operators, rather than through the Government arbitrarily fixing wages and other conditions. He declared that as a coal miner he would surely object to power being given the Coal Production Commission to fix prices, wages and conditions because the members had not an intimate knowledge of the industry.

"The transportation trouble is the biggest problem confronting the country today,' he added. 'It is useless to

talk patriotism to the miners when they are compelled to remain idle owing to the lack of cars to carry the coal they produce.' ”

It was his first national mention but things followed thick and fast after that. President White resigned to take a position on the War Labor Board and Frank J. Hayes was named president with John L. Lewis vice-president. The positions of both men were confirmed by the International Executive Board of the union. But it was as virtual leader of the miners of America that Mr. Lewis addressed 1,300 delegates at the biennial convention of the union which convened in Indianapolis, January 15, 1918. For President Hayes was either drunk or ill from that time on, placing Mr. Lewis at the helm of the greatest single union in America, an organization in which a dozen years before he had been but the smallest cog.

His report to the membership showed that since 1912 the United Mine Workers of America had obtained wage increases ranging from 30 to 104 percent for different classifications of labor. He presented figures to back his assertion that the lack of production both in bituminous and anthracite fields was due to insufficient railroad facilities. Basing his estimate on the result of a questionnaire sent to local unions, he said the loss of time due to railroad congestion was equivalent to that necessary for mining 36,760,715 tons of coal.

And thus he brought to light the truth of the forecast made in the summer of 1917 before the Coal Committee of the Council of Defense. He referred to the reported labor shortage as a “bugaboo” and said the cry of “lack of labor” came from those who sought to hold down wages to the lowest level.

Speeches pledging whole-hearted support of the government in the war were cheered and approved vigorously by the delegates. They booed the federal courts for decisions adverse to the union and applauded when a letter sent by President Woodrow Wilson to the nominal head of the union, Mr. Hayes, was read and the nation's chief executive pledged the cooperation of the government to the miners, assuring them they were doing their duty towards the welfare of the country.

Mr. Hayes pointed out that more than 20,000 members of the union had enlisted for military service. Because of the desire of the union leaders to expedite the frantic production of coal for America and her allies, there was no demand for increased wages. In the light of what has happened since, thousands of miners now believe they showed a form of ultra-patriotism.

Mr. Lewis worked quietly but steadily and efficiently throughout the remainder of the war period. He was so busy he never took time to sober Mr. Hayes, and so it was he who provided that steady stream of black carbon more precious in war than that other carbon, the diamond. He served on many advisory committees and learned a great deal from the members of each. Not the least of these lessons was that of learning to plunge through an armor of personal charm to get at the essence of the usually selfish motives which prompted intrigue. He never denied, but rather sounded out loudly, that he regarded politics or self-seeking during a period of national stress as treason. He learned to look with suspicion upon everyone and everything, until he could investigate. And always he had at heart the interests of "my people."

While he rubbed shoulders and compared charts with

the so-called leaders of the land he never once forgot that his word was the great beam that stemmed from the feeble flicker of half a million small lamps illuminating the pick sweep in dank mine corridors.

He found time to supervise a scientific study of the problem presented by the railroads' lack of rolling stock and by their partisanship against the United Mine Workers of America. Slowly he built up the evidence for a sensational exposé.

When the great struggle was over and congratulations were in order, Mr. Lewis had left the halls of the mighty. For his son, John L. Lewis, Jr., was born November 25, 1918 and Mr. Lewis had a corridor to pace at home.

Chapter Three

"NOT TOO PROUD TO FIGHT"

November, 1918—October, 1919

THE BIG BLOOD SPREE WAS OVER. The death belches were stilled. But the goodtime boys who had said "have just one more" little war had neglected to say "it's on me." America was one big hangover.

There were good sound reasoning people who suddenly recalled that they had not been awfully angry at any one. The horrible thought came that perhaps their sons had died for empty phrases.

There was a natural reaction of hysteria when the drug of excitement wore off. There was great use of the phrase: "Never again." And so it came about that many people who never had concealed a single bomb in their beard began to have pacifist ideas and to wonder about the profit motive in patriotism.

They saw that the war profiteers, the most successful filchers in the history of the human race, had new yachts out of their spoils. It was plain, too, that there was at least a grain of truth in the statement that these men aped England's clothing, mannerisms and caste system, and that their sons in the Eastern schools affected her accent. Was there more behind it?

They wondered if the doughboys went where the DOUGH Boys dictated.

Since they were confused, many of them turned towards other leaders. It was natural, since Capitalism had turned out questionably in this great instance, Communism should get a larger following. And this is not to say that people turn to Communism when, or because, they are confused. It is merely to say that Americans for the first time in appreciable numbers began to realize that perhaps part of the old system was wrong, that it was not liberal and free, and did not provide an even break for all Americans.

John L. Lewis saw the whole situation through miner's eyes. And just as they say you can see the stars from the depth of a dark well, perhaps he saw more clearly from a somber mineshaft. To him coal was the most important substance in America, or the whole world. Just as any dentist sees the state of your health reflected in his little oral mirror, and the chemist sees our globe in the bottom of a test tube, John L. Lewis saw the answer to everything in lumps of coal. He knew those chunks furnished the power that turned the turbines of American industry and brought light and heat to homes.

He saw the Red in the union's political thermometer rising and he knew when it might explode. He heard, too, a cry for a wage adjustment, now that the war was over. It became a dominant and persistent chant.

On the matter of the wage increase, he went to the White House and suggested to President Woodrow Wilson and Dr. Harry A. Garfield, Fuel Administrator, that since the Armistice had been signed some revision of wages should be made. The Lever Act, under which the mining of coal was being administered, was a war-time measure. It restricted the miners from fighting for their

objectives with the only weapon they possessed: the strike. It practically made strikers liable for criminal conspiracy; as a matter of fact, that charge was later leveled at the miners.

Now only a short time before Mr. Lewis had been an important and patriotic citizen, an adjunct of the government. But now that he wanted something for his people, who had been faithful, the back slappers became belly punchers. They were outraged. The man they had described as "busy John L." became the burly, belligerent, bellicose Mr. Lewis. And they told him the war was not over.

It was true, they said, that the Armistice had been signed, but why should Mr. Lewis grow so mercenary? His industry was still under the control of the confining Lever Act, and the government officials practically dared him to do anything about it. Anyway Mr. Wilson was fairly busy buying a yachting cap while planning what to do with Poland.

Even in those days there were plenty of people who would have sworn in an affidavit that these tactics were not the type to use with the mine leader.

"Your unwise judgment will come back to haunt you," he said to Fuel Administrator Garfield, and left to prepare the ghost party.

Mr. Hayes grew very ill and Mr. Lewis became acting president of the Union as the clouds gathered before the union convention in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 9, 1919. There were more than 2,000 delegates present, the largest number ever to attend such a conclave. The genesis of one of the greatest episodes in labor history in America was in the air.

Although he said his decision would be bitterly criticized by much of the press and the public, Mr. Lewis announced that there must be no further delay in presenting demands for higher wages and shorter hours. He demonstrated that he was a remarkable public speaker as he outlined his plans and promised that no interference would be tolerated from any agency seeking to prevent the accomplishment of the miner's program. When he slew the opposition verbally he sprayed a tincture of laughing gas into the embalming fluid, where other labor speakers invariably buried their own points in the quicklime of passion.

Since the Hindenburg line had been back in Germany almost a year, Mr. Lewis said sarcastically that the war must be practically over. He was applauded when he attacked the high cost of living and when he tore the pending Cummins Bill apart. This bill, if passed into law, he said, would make arbitration in labor disputes compulsory, and would outlaw strikes.

"It is an attempt to re-introduce economic slavery," he boomed.

The delegates voted for a sixty percent wage increase a six-hour day and a five-day week. Officials of the union maintained that the shorter day and week would give more men an opportunity to earn a living wage.

Then Mr. Lewis turned on the Communists. He had decided before this that they were planning to make America a vassal state with a remote control government in Moscow, and that they were going to attempt it through the miner's union. Communists annoyed him then, besides constituting a serious menace to the country, he believed. They were always confusing the issues with

some outside project, and were too indirect, he thought. When they picketed for wage increases, they also demanded the freedom of Tom Mooney.

Now Mr. Lewis probably agreed that freeing Tom Mooney would be a good thing, but he wanted to win the immediate points facing him. He was a realist and he believed in forthright action. This is not to say that he did not have a vision, but rather that he was not an ineffectual visionary. He considered himself liberal, but he was a practical liberal, and there was a difference.

He denounced the I.W.W., and the "One Big Union" idea, which he believed came straight from Moscow, but which in part he later espoused. He called them "fantastical ideas of misguided enthusiasts and mercenary enemies of the trade union movement."

"The daydreams of visionaries," those things, he said, were not for John L. Lewis. He said it and he meant it. And he made those he talked about like it. The conventions of the United Mine Workers of America were democratic meetings except when John L. Lewis was the leader. Then he kept things in order. His order.

His blast at the "dream boys" over, Mr. Lewis turned now to the business at hand; securing wage demands. A later meeting was called for Indianapolis on October 23rd, for the coal operators turned a deaf ear to the whole matter. At the second gathering the leader was authorized to call a strike on November 1st. It would include 400,000 miners in twenty-five coal producing states.

President Wilson, from a sickbed, led the storm of protest that greeted this announcement.

"It is not only unjustifiable but it is unlawful," he said of the strike. "The law will be enforced and means found

to protect the national interest in any emergency that may arise."

Other government officials charged that the union leaders were acting in bad faith, since the Lever Act was still operative, and that no strike should be called at least until the membership of the union had been polled on it.

The press of the nation was almost unanimous in its protest. There was a warning of what a coal shortage might mean in the winter months and of bloodshed to come.

The *Independent* and *Harper's Weekly*, however, was somewhat independent and weakly said:

"The demands are not quite so excessive as they sound in a bald statement."

"Mr. Lewis is peremptory rather than conciliatory," decided the *Review of Reviews*. "Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson, formerly a practical coal miner and a former officer of the Union, who had been called in, endeavored to avert the strike without success. He attributed the blame for this failure to the union leaders and not to the mine operators."

All this did not deter John L. Lewis. He struck out boldly at his most powerful antagonist, at least in title, and said:

"President Wilson's attitude is the climax of a long series of attempted usurpations of executive power."

It was a typical, clipped quote from the energetic Mr. Lewis and there was no equivocation in it.

The next move from the White House was to secure speedy and emphatic resolutions of support from both houses of Congress.

Whereupon Mr. Lewis replied that the President and

his cabinet by a unanimous vote were allying themselves with sinister financial interests.

"They seek to deny justice to labor and to precipitate our country into industrial turmoil," he said.

Stormed the *Review of Reviews*:

"He [Mr. Lewis] attempted an argument in the field of constitutional law, to justify the right of the miners to strike."

Labor Secretary William B. Wilson tried separate conferences with both sides. Finally he proposed a compromise wage increase to equal the advance in living costs from those of 1914. He suggested that the rate fixed be only temporary, effective until March 11, 1920

Mr. Lewis replied only: "The strike order will stand."

Governor William L. Harding of Iowa became alarmed about the situation and asked governors of all coal producing states to meet for a discussion of plans to deal with the situation. He suggested that perhaps state executives could bring about arbitration of the main issues.

To this Mr. Lewis replied that the strike order, once issued, would be rescinded only when the operators met all the union's demands. The operators promptly countered by saying they would not negotiate with a strike order issued against them. Thomas T. Brewster, head of the Coal Operator's Commission, as spokesman for the employers, said the strike call would mean fight without a chance for conciliation.

Charges and counter charges filled the air.

An up and coming Ohioan named William Green, whom John L. Lewis had met at various conventions, was secretary-treasurer of the miners' union. He was busy with executive board meetings, while in Springfield, Illi-

nois, reporters found Acting President Lewis at his home.

"The strike order is still in effect," he said. "The statement of President Wilson that our strike is unlawful has had no results as far as we are concerned. I am astounded, however, to know of the action which the President has taken in this instance. His action is without precedent, and, insofar as I am aware, without warrant of law."

Mr. Lewis added that when, sixty days before, the country was faced with a steel strike, the President did not make any statement in reference to the situation, but instead had made overtures to Judge E. H. Gary, Chairman of the Board of the United States Steel Corporation in the hope of securing a meeting between him and his employees to avert the strike.

"Judge Gary," Mr. Lewis said, "refused mediation. The Government permitted the country to be involved in a great strike without protest.

"Today, when the coal miners of the country, in a justified attempt to improve their conditions, undertake a wage move we find our efforts strangled by the President of the United States, who holds that the proposed strike is unjustifiable and unlawful."

He snorted and his black brows beetled ominously as he recalled that the emergency could never have existed had the government officials listened when he first tried to discuss the matter months before.

"I told them their unwise judgment would come back to haunt them and it has," he said.

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States Circuit Court Justice Joseph Suffington, of the Seventh Judicial

District, made an unprecedented appeal to the miners to stand by the President and refuse to strike. His plea was especially potent as he had officiated in the naturalization of thousands of the union's members involved in the dispute.

Ellis Searles, editor of the miner's official publication, the *Mine Workers' Journal*, issued a statement from his offices in Indianapolis, urging another three-cornered parley of operators, employees and government officials.

"If the Government will use the same sort of pressure on the operators that it is using on the United Mine Workers of America there will be no trouble in bringing about a settlement," he added.

After another of the frequent meetings of President Wilson's cabinet it became known that a course of action had been determined upon. Property rights were going to be placed above human rights again.

The *New York Times* printed a dispatch from Bellaire, Ohio, in which union leaders were said to have admitted that despite a strike call two-thirds of the 11,000 miners in the area would work if the Federal government took over the mines and gave them protection. The story added that many of the men felt they were being forced into a strike they did not want.

"Eighty percent of the men in Eastern Ohio, and particularly Belmont County," the reporter wired, "are in favor of arbitration. Moreover they would rather have the eight-hour day and the forty-four-hour week, since they can make more money in the longer period."

Less determined men might have faltered, but John L. Lewis said simply: "The strike cannot be avoided."

Chapter Four

THE WHOLE WORLD SHIVERS

October–November, 1919

THE COAL BINS of the entire world were rapidly becoming depleted just as the miners of America were planning to plunge into an economic war with their employers. John L. Lewis probably knew that half of the people in the civilized areas of the globe were to feel, directly or indirectly, the weight of the stoppage he planned. Naturally he realized also that the action governmental officials would take was necessitated by the public welfare.

Privately, and later, publicly, he favored government control of mining, realizing that without coal the United States could not use its machine-age implements or maintain its health. But under the present clearly defined "devil eat the hindmost" system of Capitalism, all he could do was fight for what was coming to his people. The fact that he called the strike when he did, at the beginning of the cold months, only emphasized what sort of icicle-sharp weapons he felt it was necessary to use against the Coal Barons.

Surely the public interest should not always take a wage out of the envelopes of the diggers. The operators had "got theirs" during the World War and the miners had received the worn-out platitudes of politicians. Now it was time for an accounting.

Mr. Lewis clearly comprehended the gravity of the situation. Every newspaper he saw emphasized it. In Spain the miners had just won a fight for a seven-hour day, and it would be months before the output could catch up with the demand. On October 9th representatives of Britain's black diggers waited upon Prime Minister Lloyd George and demanded nationalization of British coal works. On October 4th he read cables from Vienna that the Austrian Government planned to buy coal from America, and that the fuel shortage was already increasing that capital's death rate. But there was little coal to be bought in the United States, in the face of the strike threat, and the Austrians were forced to curtail railway traffic sharply. Miners were striking in Belgium at the same time and the fuel shortage there was reflected in Bavarian communities.

The German invasion had ruined many of France's mines. It would take eight years to get them back into shape, experts declared. Then, too, labor was lacking and somewhat in need of readjustment after its ranks had been shelled for so many years.

Mr. Lewis' Indianapolis newspapers told him of the suffering endured by tourists in unheated Parisian hotels. The cafés, too, were ordered closed at night as a conservation measure, and lighting restrictions were placed into effect, just as during the military operations. Railway companies announced that they planned to change their locomotives over to the use of oil. But in the meantime special trains were abolished. Even the great municipal clocks in the French capital were stopped.

Across the Rhine lay a Germany so cold that the Weimar Courts abandoned sittings. At one period trains

were stopped for ten days. Berlin's Unter Den Linden looked as bleak as a small town thoroughfare. Her great lights and all others in the city were cut at an early hour each night. The coal shortage was acute all over the distressed Fatherland.

In Hungary the dictatorship received a deputation of miners and demanded coal. The fields would be placed under Army control and then nationalized if production were not stepped up, Admiral Horthy warned. In Rome the officials announced that there was fuel for the railways for only a month, and after that they hoped to buy from the United States.

Alert city editors here saw that the key to the comfort of millions at home and abroad was in the hands of John L. Lewis, who had just sent out notices to local mine chieftains that they could assign a sufficient number of men to insure the care and protection of mine property when the strike call went into effect. Reporters found the unsmiling union head at home, reading Homer's "Illiad" and an occasional detective story. Some of them remarked about it with the implication that he was fiddling around while Rome did without coal to burn.

"Things were much the same in the days of Homer as they are now," Mr. Lewis said.

A day or so later, as he sat in a chair car of a train speeding to Washington where wage conferences with the operators were to begin, the same news hawks found him reading the "Odyssey." It was not an intellectual front for him; he liked that sort of reading and his speeches showed he used what he read as background. But tucked in with the copies of the newspapers were mystery books, too.

"I always say," Mr. Lewis remarked pleasantly, "that mystery and detective stories are restful to the brain when things get tough."

If so, he had need of many such volumes immediately, for on October 27th United States Senator Thomas of Colorado introduced a resolution before that governing agency providing for the use of Federal troops so that the mines could be operated without the union miners. It was passed on October 30th, and 800 veterans of the First Division, United States Army, stationed at Camp Taylor in Ohio, were on their way a few hours later to the West Virginia fields to do or die for King Coal.

It was the Zero hour, the last day of October, and the strike would begin the next day. The country, with President Woodrow Wilson at its head, was not too proud to fight its own laborers. As the troops were on the way, state militia was called out in Wyoming and Utah. Other states were to have their national guard regiments practically at attention for many weeks. To show, however, that the government was really "at war" because the miners had dared to ask for an accounting from their employers, there was no attempt to disguise the Attorney General's hand when a temporary restraining order was secured against the union officials, forbidding their calling a strike.

United States Court Justice A. B. Anderson in Indianapolis signed the papers aimed to prevent "free" Americans from calling an industrial stoppage. But in the face of this order Mr. Lewis merely reissued his strike command. He said the papers would only complicate matters, not halt one single thing.

Also on October 30th, W. A. Marshall, president of

the Wholesale Coal Trade Association, made a public protest and sent a circular letter out against coal price fixing by the Fuel Administrator, Dr. Garfield. He had learned in advance that the government planned to reestablish war-time maximum prices to control the situation, leaving the would-be profiteers at the starting post.

There were last-minute and frenzied efforts on every hand. Samuel Gompers, Matthew Woll and other American Federation of Labor officials attacked the restraining order which Judge Anderson had issued against the mine union heads. The largest publications in the land printed charges that the operators had curtailed production of coal after the war ended, and the operators denied it.

And on November 1st the strike began, on schedule. Hardly a pick was lifted and not a single mine car in a union field was capsized to be relieved of a useful load of coal. Acting President Lewis pointed out, however, that non-union mines, as inadequate as they would be (they could supply only a fraction of the nation's needs), were bringing in a rich return to their operators. Since greed was the cause, let it help to be the cure.

The West Virginia State Coal Association issued a statement from Huntington telling of a "break" in the ranks of the miners.

"Operations," the statement read, "have been resumed in fifteen mines in the Northern fields in this State."

Mr. Lewis did not bother to make a denial.

Some one telegraphed Attorney General Palmer, he proudly announced from Washington, that diggers in the Walsenburg district of Colorado wanted to return to work but feared violence. Couldn't Mr. Palmer send them some troops, please?

The second day of the strike Fuel Administrator Garfield announced the maximum prices were in effect. But thousands paid "bootleg" prices for their supply, and felt lucky. Hundreds of marginal mines were opened. Countless regiments of men got jobs as "guards" for the coal companies, and served only to increase the tension around the tipples, but perhaps that is what they were hired to do.

There were indications, however, that some of the union officials would, for their part, have called the strike off for terms other than the six-hour day, five-day week and would have been willing to substitute a wage increase of twenty-five percent. Mr. Gompers, from his Washington office, publicly urged a new conference of the belligerents. It was his belief, he said, that the miners would participate in a peace parley, even though they had shown their strength only three days at this time.

High government officials continued to show where political bread was buttered. Some of them repeatedly called up the governors of the states where the strike was in effect, and urged the sending of troops here and there, as favor to this congressman or that senator. Federal troops became tin-hatted commuters on coal barons' business. It was the largest turnout of special guards the companies ever enjoyed, and yet the situation was not to their liking. Many of their officers wanted to sign individual contracts, but this, of course, could not be granted.

"The Government was firm in its legal attitude," commented a current issue of the *Review of Reviews*, "but with or without injunction, the strike is doomed to failure."

Events moved quickly. Governors of the coal-mining

states acted in harmony with the Federal government in attempts to crush the strike; many of the powers of Dr. Garfield as Fuel Administrator were transferred to Secretary of the Interior Lane, and coal priorities for the railroads similar to those effective during the war were put into effect.

Accorded military protection, the non-union mines established new production records. But it was only a particle in the nation's coal bucket.

The other workers of America were served propaganda with their breakfast food. There were comparisons, for instance, with the anthracite coal strike which occurred during President Theodore Roosevelt's administration. It was the operators who refused to confer then, the collective press of the nation recalled almost unanimously. But, it was pointed out, the employers finally gave in when faced by irate public that wanted coal even if it were to be fleeced for it. It took the "social-minded" editors of *Review of Reviews*, again to make the rapier thrust of reason.

"There is less excuse for Mr. Lewis and his fellow leaders," the magazine said, "than there was for the owners of the anthracite mines of Roosevelt's day. This is because no Federal statute was involved in that period and the President's intervention was less obviously demanded.

"Mr. Lewis sought public sympathy against the injunction as 'unfair procedure'," the editors commented.

The *Outlook*, once edited by the late President Theodore Roosevelt, was especially bitter against the miners, calling their strike "a conspiracy."

"There will be no compromise," Attorney General Pal-

mer announced. "There can be no compromise with the strikers or with others who break the law."

Then, on November 7th, he called a number of governors of coal-producing states to a Washington conference. The following day he threw out his chest, took a deep breath, and, like King Canute, called upon the tides to stop. He ordered the strike call revoked.

But King Canute suffered less, really. There were no afternoon editions in those days to record what the waters did to His Majesty's new shoes.

By November 7th the coal shortage had become so acute in Chicago that many mills were forced to suspend operations. It was estimated that 25,000 men were put out of work. The rest of the city operated on the basis of a six-hour business day. Newspapers announced abbreviated editions. After a short time, the Regional Coal Commission ordered coal rationing in the second largest city of the United States. The steel plants at Gary, Indiana, nearby, were closed.

After the strike had been in effect only one week, T. T. Brewster, speaking for the operators, charged that Lenin and Trotsky were back of the strike and the money to finance it came from those fabulous Moscow coffers that everyone heard so much about. Several large and otherwise reasonable newspapers actually printed this silly assertion. For some reason, perhaps because he felt so strongly about things Russian, Mr. Lewis ventured to deny that he had received a single ruble, and asked Mr. Brewster for proof. Which, of course, was the last of the matter.

"The Government injunction is so autocratic as to stagger the human mind," was the next barrage from the other side, this time the American Federation of Labor's execu-

tive committee, meeting in Washington. The support of the Federation was pledged and the combined force of organized labor was invoked against the operators.

"By all the facts in the case the miner's strike is just, and we indorse it. We pledge to the miners the full support of the American Federation of Labor and appeal to the workers and the citizenship of our country to give a like indorsement and aid to the men engaged in this momentous struggle," proclaimed the Federation mimeograph machines.

But, of course, that was to be expected. John L. Lewis knew the motion was routine. All he said was: "Very interesting. I have no other comment."

On November 10th Samuel Gompers addressed delegates of the International Labor Conference in New York City, and re-asserted the determination of the Federation to back the strike to the end. And though the most transparent optimist did not attempt to see the end in sight, the public was suffering, just as in any other war, and neither side was very anxious to continue the affair. Once they were in that frame of mind, the time was propitious for negotiations.

And even though the wisdom of it could be disputed, and the humanity of it seriously doubted, Federal pressure was being intensified against the miners. John L. Lewis, like any good strategist, wanted to drive ahead as far as he could go with the least number of casualties, then halt. He saw an opening now, knew the union's weight had been felt, and on November 11th, Armistice Day, suddenly announced that he would consider an armistice in his war.

At that time he had practically been assured by govern-

ment officials close to the throne of Woodrow I that the operators were ready to sit down and make real concessions. A concrete proposal for a conference was made. The mine leader made it plain that the negotiations should not be drawn out, and that "my people are not to wait long for their just wages." A conference was set for November 14th in Washington.

On that date Secretary William B. Wilson made a strong speech as the parley opened. Addressing himself to the operators he warned they must drop their stand-pat attitude; they must look forward to a few less profits. Turning to the miners he said the thirty-hour week at that time was impossible. It was a typically dictatorial speech of a typical Wilson cabinet member, but it was aimed at solution of a problem that needed final pressure, now that so much conniving had brought the parties face to face.

A few days later Dr. Garfield entered the negotiations, just as the operators finally conceded that they would grant additional wages of fifteen cents a ton. The Fuel Administrator rushed happily to the miners, meeting in a separate conference room, and conveyed the offer. The miners broke out into loud laughter instead of making a reply. This startled the would-be peacemaker, but he grimly went back for more.

Chapter Five

FIRST NATIONAL VICTORY

November, 1919—January, 1920

IN THE STEAMING JUNGLE words throb out of drum beats. In the jungles of civilization news seems to travel with the heart beat. But whatever method aided its progress, both employers and miners learned definitely without being able to quote any person in the threat, that they must stop demanding and demurring and produce results. If they did not, Uncle Sam was going to stop chafing with cold and take over the mines himself, dictating what the miners were to be paid, what the operators could get for their "condemned" property, and how much the public must pay for the product.

The information was to the effect that the belligerents had to reach a decision within a week. There were several stormy sessions and then Secretary William R. Wilson announced to the reporters waiting in the hallway outside the smoky conference rooms that progress had been made.

"Why, I've held all along, you know, that a settlement could be reached," he said. "Yes, you may quote me as saying that progress has been made."

That almost brought out the fury behind the John L. Lewis poker face. He had promised to withhold comment, and he admitted it to the reporters, but he turned his head and flung over his shoulder the following bellow:

"Progress had been made? That's what Secretary Wilson says."

Just as they nearly always do, the newsmen learned that a twenty per cent wage increase had been offered and rejected, and finally withdrawn. There began to be rumors of arbitration, but the union head spiked them.

"We have not accepted arbitration offers. And that is only half of the story. We are not going to accept the proposal made," he said.

Secretary Wilson then made a suggestion of a thirty-one percent wage increase, which the operators indignantly turned down. But they added that they would rest their case with Fuel Administrator Garfield, who had been doing some very effective work with them by this time. His approval was generally conceded by now to be necessary to validate any wage increases.

The operators asked for instructions, and Attorney General Palmer and Fuel Administrator Garfield met and evolved a government proposal which stated baldly that the operators must expect to meet a reduction in final profits and that the public must be protected. There was a new liberal note in the air and it may have been that John L. Lewis, the pragmatist, was proving that he had done all expected of him in willingness to take a reasonable compromise, but was getting no response from the check signers.

At least one member of the President's cabinet had been scored by the Tory press when he was quoted as saying he thought the miners were now entitled to a substantial raise, that it was fair and equitable. Shortly afterwards the cabinet had a stormy session, attended by Walker D. Hines, Director General of Railroads. There was a definite split and several personal remarks exchanged.

Meanwhile there were cases recorded in the public prints where people were dying because of lack of coal and the unemployment problem was approaching the stage of a national crisis. Police court cases showed an increase of petty thefts, many of them in connection with an attempt to get coal from the yards of large companies. Many box cars were raided.

Authorities of the Province of Ontario, Canada, seized all coal stocks to protect the public against the effect of the strike in the United States. In Indianapolis, national home of the United Mine Workers of America, industrial plants went on a new schedule of three working days in each week. Retail stores stopped business at 4:00 P.M. daily. The Kansas City, Kansas, authorities forbade public gatherings and closed the schools.

The American Wholesale Coal Association took time to repeat that the miners were defying the government by striking, and Ellis Searles, editor of the *Miners' Journal*, said an even distribution of mining operations and buying would solve the problems in the coal industry. He said there were too many mines and too many miners, thus forcing their wages down.

Mr. Lewis knew his position was growing stronger. On November 26th, Dr. Garfield was authorized to offer an average wage increase of fourteen percent, but with the proviso that the price of coal was not to be increased. The operators "accepted" their own proposal, but the miners held out for a 31.61 percent increase. Union Secretary William Green ventured that the conference would probably end on the next day and said that the miners could not possibly proceed on such figures as presented in the government suggestion.

His prophecy came true as the parley resulted in a deadlock. Mr. Lewis announced, however, that he would remain "to hear any suggestions that might be made." The following day the government warned the miners and operators that it would not tolerate interference with the production of coal for long. Instructions were sent to all United States district attorneys by the Department of Justice, directing that prosecution be conducted on evidence of conspiracy on either side.

"Report has come to me that the present crisis in the coal industry will be used to break the labor unions," said Administrator Garfield at this juncture. "I am as much opposed to an attempt to destroy the privilege of collective bargaining and the union of workmen as I am to the efforts of labor leaders to keep labor satisfied by a constant boosting of wages, regardless of public interest, or to the effort of leaders in the industrial world to boost prices unduly to the public."

Governor Fred D. Gardner of Missouri on the same day invited the governors of Illinois, Ohio, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana to meet in Chicago on November 30th to map out a program of concerted action regarding the strike.

Seven of the state executives met and decided that, once granted Federal protection, the states would take over the mines and operate them. Another blow was struck at the stoppage when a cluster of malcontents at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, became a propaganda point for the owners, who announced that 75,000 of their employees had agreed to return to work under the Garfield plan of a fourteen percent increase in pay.

The public was growing more bitter as coal bins grew

emptier. There was talk of a plot between the miners and their employers to "milk the public" and several publicity-loving people were quoted along those lines.

Governor Gardner of Missouri did not have to be shown, he said, that conditions were desperate in Barton County. He seized fifteen mines.

"Conditions are so bad. The State will protect its citizens," he said.

Coal rationing now became almost as prevalent as it was during the war, yet the strike had only been in effect a little more than a month. There were new patriotic slogans about the substitutes for sitting before a comfortable fire, and many of the old-fashioned newspaper editors suggested going to bed early.

On December 3rd a group of cities of the West complained to the Federal government that Eastern cities were not cooperating in conserving fuel. S. C. Mason, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, appealed next day to the organization members to economize in coal, and other leaders followed his example.

Detroit schools cut their hours in half. Pittsburgh announced that street-car service was greatly cut and that few electric signs would be lighted. In Michigan the leading industrialists predicted that 250,000 men would be idle in their plants unless coal was produced soon.

The situation seemed hopeless.

But suddenly Acting President John L. Lewis and the less colorful Mr. Green left their headquarters in Indianapolis and hurried to the White House. There was no announcement of their movements but they spent a day and its evening hours with President Wilson, talking earnestly. At one o'clock in the morning of December 7th,

Attorney General Palmer called together a group of newspapermen still on duty at the White House and said tersely: "The strike has been settled."

While he refused to give out details of the settlement, he did say that President Wilson had made the miners a definite, concrete proposal and that John L. Lewis and William Green would urge the union membership to accept it at a conclave on December 10th. They had assured the President that they felt the miners would agree.

Mr. Lewis later was besieged for a statement and said that the miners had accepted, but were not yielding to the operators, "rather to the greatest government on earth." He said the move was wise and patriotic, but he would not discuss terms. The radical element in the United Mine Workers Union began setting off squibs against Mr. Lewis, saying that only the convention of the membership had the power to accept an offer.

President Wilson then issued a call to the miners to return to work, and it was followed by a similar order from their leader. The tipples of twenty-five states began at last to accumulate the coal dust of action instead of the dust of Time.

Following the announcement that the President's settlement terms had been accepted and work was being resumed, fuel restrictions were immediately lifted.

But trouble had only started for Mr. Lewis. He was faced with a difficult presentation of the terms of the agreement with an insurgent movement within his ranks to heckle him, and moreover, with charges of contempt of the Federal Court's injunction order. Information against seventy-four international and district leaders of the union

had been filed on December 3rd, charging conspiracy to keep the strike in force.

Mr. Lewis, Mr. Green, Percy Tetlow, the union's statistician, and Ellis Searles, the editor of the *Miners' Journal*, were among those named for prosecution. They were called before the Federal Court and told to supply \$10,000 bail for a hearing. Other officers of the union were forced to put up smaller bonds. And there was more trouble to follow. The Federal government announced that an investigation would be conducted into alleged violations of the Lever Act, which, it reminded, was still in force as a war-time measure, and which had been re-enacted by Congress in supporting President Wilson's early stand in the coal situation. But as a sort of antidote, the announcement continued that any alleged violations of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act would be investigated at the same time.

Federal Judge Anderson at Indianapolis summoned a special grand jury to investigate the government's evidence and the charges that the mine owners were plotting to cut coal output. The Federal District Attorney's office at Indianapolis simultaneously issued a statement saying, "It is time to determine if law or a group of men run the nation."

When the ratifying convention got under way in Indianapolis on December 10th, the iron hand of John L. Lewis was felt and his golden voice was heard. The radical elements in the organization were blasted in their tracks with oratory and frozen with baleful glares. There were some to whisper later that it was a steam-rollered affair, but there was no one to bring proof.

The officers of the union claimed to be unable to learn

the name of the lone dissenting representative. The miners were to receive an immediate fourteen percent wage increase. There was to be an investigation and a revision of the wage scale by an impartial agency.

"This action should show our men's loyalty to the country," Mr. Lewis said after the ratification vote.

"We have taken this action," he continued, "conscious of our responsibilities to our nation during this acute industrial crisis and firm in the conviction that the word of the President of the United States will secure for the mine workers just consideration of their merited demands."

It was officially announced to the membership that the compromise plan would put the higher wages into effect immediately upon the men entering the mines and that President Wilson would appoint a commission of three, including representatives of the employers and employees, to determine within sixty days a basis for a new pay increase. The report was to be accepted by both sides. Although there were a few radical leaders in Illinois, Kansas and one or two other states who insisted upon criticizing the settlement and doubting that the Investigating Commission's report would be favorable, more than two-thirds of the diggers were back at work two days after the ratifying officials heard the opening gavel fall. The others were in the pits within a few days more.

On December 29th the coal operators met in New York City and decided to cooperate with the President's Commission to the extent of furnishing complete statistics concerning the industry. They reported production costs, wages, and sales prices. The Commission held a meeting the same day. After a short delay it became known that the miners' pay envelope should include a great deal more

cash than before the strike commenced. And the industry's greatest stoppage was over, except for the lingering litigation and the investigations.

Over?

There was yet to be recorded what some newspapers referred to as a "minor aftermath," in the resignation of Fuel Administrator Garfield. As he told the members of the House Interstate Commerce Committee shortly afterwards, he had felt that the bituminous strike transferred the rights of the Fuel Administration to a committee of three men, the President's Commission.

And then it was suddenly remembered that despite his prominence in the early negotiations, the final settlement had been made without the influence of the Fuel Chief. He had suffered in comparative quietude, without benefit of press photographers. Many an official has quit for less.

Chapter Six

BARBER TO MEDUSA

January–August, 1920

AS ELEMENTARY as all great truths is the statement that change involves movement.

It has long been recognized that when men become leaders they assume a more conservative attitude but whether this stems from a selfish desire to maintain position, generally, is a fit subject for discussion. Throughout the ages progressives have been divided into two great camps. There have been those who perhaps saw the vision of what could be too clearly, who reached out for it with rabid statement; and on the other hand there have been those who were content to keep the happy picture well in mind but to take each step progressively.

It is a division, perhaps, of the evolutionists and the revolutionists.

But John L. Lewis, who has often been called the Jack Dempsey of labor, could not be called either evolutionist or revolutionist very accurately. He did not begin his leadership with any particular set of ideas, any certain integrated list of ideals. Dempsey once said that he struck from where his hand was. That was the science he knew. John L. Lewis moved, in his strategy, like Dempsey punched. He was always primarily interested in the immediate step, but that step he took ruthlessly. It was

always definitely in his direction. There was never a backward movement or glance. He, like Dempsey, punched until "somebody fell."

There have been those to say that he lacked the imagination of the revolutionary. There is nothing in the record to prove that. It is the impatient statement of the exhausted idealist, the proclamation of the man who would rather have his birds in the bush of the future than have a chicken to fry in hard times while he looks forward to catching others.

But besides all this, Mr. Lewis was moving forward with a speed that should have pleased even the most imaginative. He saw, without professing occult powers, that there was trouble ahead. In the firm belief that he could help better than others who did not know the miners' problems as well, and with the desire of any dictator to remain in power, he set about bolstering up his organization. He knew that in a month or so the votes were to be counted for the presidency of the union. Mr. Hayes had resigned.

Samuel Gompers acquainted Mr. Lewis with the fact that government officials had promised not to prosecute the coal miners when the Lever Act was first proposed. Yet nearly fifty had been indicted. Furthermore, the government had shown Mr. Lewis very effectively that coal was considered of such importance that almost anything could happen when the public lacked its supply. So he planned to dump the problem right back on the government. Why shouldn't the government regulate the industry and provide once and for all that the servants who supplied this necessary fuel be paid a living wage? If it was going to intercede, why should the government

not direct? If its reason was orderliness, why not supply control to effect it?

But the immediate problem facing Mr. Lewis was the report that many bituminous operators were discharging men with a view to breaking up the union. It was an expression of bad faith, he said, and a violation of the agreement with the government, under which the miners returned to work. It was particularly bad, he pointed out, in view of the coming ratification convention of the miners, to be held in Columbus, Ohio, beginning January 6, 1920.

"John L.," as he was increasingly referred to, left early for the Ohio capital. He knew that his forces must be strengthened. To get a favorable decision would show his leadership survived because he was fittest. The motivations that influenced the miner down in the pit extended right up to the top of his organization to create strife. The difference always has been that whereas the membership of the union combined a narrower, restricted outlook with a callousness towards personal risks to make them rich soil for radicals, their petty chiefs reflected these forces in factional bickerings.

Then, too, there was the matter of the mail vote.

When the convention opened on January 6th Mr. Lewis and Secretary-Treasurer William Green were ready. Though during the strike they had accused the government officials of bringing extra-legal pressure against the miners, both Mr. Green and Mr. Lewis said it was a wise thing to give in at the time they did. Mr. Green confided that he knew President Wilson had a letter which he threatened to release to turn the public against them and "get us all shot."

"The fight resolved itself into one against the government and not against the operators," Mr. Green said. "We could have whipped the coal operators but we could not if we had wanted to, whip the strongest government on earth—our government, which had just whipped Germany. If we had not accepted President Wilson's proposal the powers of the Federal Government would have been turned loose against us with greater ferocity than anything we have ever seen. We knew we had reached the limit.

"When Dr. Garfield got mad and quit his job because he didn't like the President's proposal we knew we had made no mistake in accepting it."

Robert H. Harlin, president of the State of Washington miners, offered an amendment to the ratification proposal to the effect that the membership could ultimately vote on the findings of the President's Commission. Mr. Lewis immediately accepted that challenge. He made a speech in which he said Mr. Harlin's motion was out of order.

"The motion proposed is purely out of order. . . . The public is entitled to know whether the miners and operators will keep faith by accepting the commission's findings," he said.

There was no appeal from the chair.

The action of the union's officials was ratified by a vote of 1,634 to 221, amid loud cheering. Shortly afterwards, Frank Farrington, ambitious leader of the Illinois miners, attempted to take the floor while Mr. Green was presiding. Being denied recognition he became insistent, and finally was thrown out of the hall.

In explaining his acceptance of the Presidential proposals, Mr. Lewis said:

"I had no desire to defy the United States Government in a contest. I shall never lead any organization but an American organization. If the day ever comes when this organization is dominated by people who are false to American traditions, that day I shall cease to be an officer in it."

He pointed out that the miners had not lost a single life in the strike, and said, "I am grateful that no widow's lamentations or wails of orphans assail our ears." He said that in his opinion the union had emerged "unscathed," but "the continuation of the strike and revolt against the government would have meant disaster and defeat."

And so the convention ended with full confidence in its leaders. Mr. Lewis had been forced to a union leader's usual extreme picture of foreboding, but he had been sincere.

The operators soon agreed to accept the award in advance of the Commission's report, but said they must "insist that coal prices shall not be fixed beyond the light of the Lever Act." They maintained that any additional price fixing would be regimentation. What they meant to say is that it would not allow profiteering which they had come to regard as their just dues, unless, of course, the flag had been waved beforehand.

The conferences in Washington with the President's Commission followed. For the miners Mr. Lewis said he not only wanted the thirty-hour, five-day week, but he insisted upon an increase in wages sufficient to permanently raise their standards of living. He charged that the diggers had always been forced to rear their children in penury and he spoke from a rich background of their circumstances, remembering the houses that they lived in; crazy, unpainted structures that reeled on stilts over some

sulphur-spewing creek where mosquitoes could answer the miner's dinner gong in double time. He recalled how promising youths were forced to pick up their father's pick in the blackness because of family debt to the coal companies. He wanted to change all those things, and here was a chance to point out their existence.

The mine statisticians showed that, allowing for comparative prices, the men were working for a salary thirty-five to forty percent lower in buying power than pre-war standards. It was a reply to the operator's statement that the miners enjoyed a potential earning power greater than any other American workingman under existing scales. And so the men of numbers contended, one against the other. The bored reporters who can seldom get excited over those kind of figures, must have recalled that it was like the testimony of psychiatrists at a murder trial. It all depended upon whose expert was testifying and how the boss wanted things said.

John L. explained that a thirty-hour, five-day week would do much for the miners in spreading employment. The operators attacked the hour provision bitterly, saying it was un-American. The same men who had chided the American labor movement as the rear guard of cooliedom now appeared to be fighting for their economic lives.

"I do not intend to remain quiet," Mr. Lewis said, "while this challenge of our Americanism is made by the operators' counsel. The mine workers yield to no one in their allegiance to American institutions, the government and the flag. These attacks are not pertinent to the matters under consideration, and we do not propose to be tried on this charge before this tribunal at the whim of any individual."

The chairman of the committee had to take cognizance. He asked that personal remarks be omitted.

The operators produced figures showing that their costs were high in comparison to the profits they made, and said that miners, as a class, were against labor-saving devices. Mr. Lewis refuted both statements. He had done a great deal of research on both points and he tried to show that the estimate of costs was inaccurate, while miners, he said, were all for anything to save work and get the coal out. The false impression arose, he believed, from the fact that when England started to industrialize some of the workers tore up the machines under the idea that they were destroying employment.

There were government figures available to show that the operators had made "fabulous profits" and they were read.

"The coal operators generally in the United States in 1914-15 lost money, when normal depletion and depreciation were taken into consideration," the report said.

"What is meant by this is that a proper item in fixing cost is depreciation of plants and depletion of cost or value of coal in the ground. In the latter part of 1916, all coal companies in the United States save those in the extreme West, began to make money.

"The result was that the operators for the year 1916, generally showed profit of from ten to thirty-five percent on capital investment. All bituminous companies east of the Mississippi River made what might be termed fabulous profits, a general average being from 100 to 150 percent on investment capital, ranging from fifteen percent to 800 percent.

"In 1918 conditions were not so good in the Appala-

chian and Central competitive districts, being reduced twenty-five to thirty percent from that of the preceding year, but profits still ranged from fifteen to 300 percent on invested capital. In the West, in 1918, conditions were better than 1917, the profits in the Rocky Mountain districts ranging as high as 400 percent on invested capital."

And so it went, point after point, and finally it was over. John L. Lewis waited for the decision in the belief that "my people will win substantial increases." He had hardly returned to his office when he learned that the union membership had sent him the only kind of fan letters he was interested in, an overwhelming indorsement for the presidency of the United Mine Workers of America.

Not long afterwards he encountered Joseph Tumulty, secretary to President Wilson.

"I see," observed Mr. Tumulty, "that you got more votes than the Democrats."

He had received the greatest vote ever accorded a candidate for the union presidency. But he remained the simple, hard-working Lucas coal digger. No title would ever unhorse this Pegasus.

Even though he had won a "victory," there was a lingering suspicion it had been a Pyhrric one. The strike had cost the country \$126,000,000.00, according to some estimates, without counting the cost to allied industries or to the railroads. But already there began to be evidences that some operators had signed the agreement in bad faith.

And there were other reactions against the miners to be recorded. Governors must write, and in the March 13th issue of the *Independent*, Governor Henry J. Allen of

Kansas signed his name to an article titled "Let the People Freeze."

"Coal operators and miners were willing to fight all winter for their selfish ends," he said, "but Kansas took up the challenge of the coal strike.

"And where capital and labor failed, the State made good."

He went on to describe how under his guidance the courts appointed receivers for the mines in the state and took them out of the control and jurisdiction of the operators. Governor Allen told how he issued calls to the miners to return to work for their state.

"But finally 10,000 volunteers in other works of life, all untrained for mine work, responded. Of this number 1,000 were selected and in ten days," according to the governor's article, "they had cleaned the mines and produced a quantity of coal sufficient to relieve the emergency period." The only grumbling and dissatisfaction heard, he said, was among those not selected for duty.

"Let it be said to the credit of the mine workers," Governor Allen added, "no action of violence on their part interfered with the orderly preliminaries and the operations of the volunteers." Which was quite a tribute. Kansas was the home of Alexander Howat, the erratic, impulsive leader of the mine workers, the man on whom Lewis kept an iron grip throughout the strike.

On March 23rd, President Wilson announced a majority decision of his investigating commission allowing twenty-seven percent increase in wages to the miners. The award meant an estimated \$200,000,000.00 increase in pay over that of October, 1919. The President requested that the operators and miners confer and set up

a new agreement as soon as possible. He also announced that on April 1st the government's control over the bituminous industry would be terminated.

The judgment and findings of the President's Commission were called "horse sense" by *The Survey*.

"The constructive suggestions offered for future reorganization of the coal industry go to the heart of the problem," the periodical said.

"On the whole the Commission lays the basis for an important readjustment of the coal industry."

John L. Lewis said that he was dissatisfied with the terms of the award since there was no provision for reforms he had sought. Moreover he said that the Commission had usurped power over matters not raised as points of issue by the operators prior to the formation of the investigating body. He noted that there was a twenty percent increase over the prevailing price of yardage of "deadwood" removed, but that the eight-hour day was retained.

The Commission suggested that the contract be terminated the following spring. Its report announced that the coal industry was speculatively overdeveloped and that it was necessary for certain marginal mines to close down. In addition the report suggested storage of coal in the summertime and shifting of freight rates so as to allow lower ones during the spring season. The Commission admitted that coal prices had not been considered since they seemed beyond the jurisdiction of the investigating agency. The membership of the mine union as a whole realized that the United States was strike-weary and so John L. Lewis resolved that there would be no cessation of work in the anthracite coal fields even though

the contract with the operators was to expire on March 31st, and no new one had been drawn.

On March 24th, at the Union League Club, the citadel of wealth in New York City, a miner's committee met with an operators' group. The employees wanted shorter hours, more pay, and they wanted the agreement to be retroactive from April 1st. Both sides were of the opinion that every effort should be made to avert a stoppage, and the operators finally assented to the stipulation that the contract should be effective as of April 1st.

Meanwhile, heads of households were putting in large supplies of coal, flooding the dealers with orders, and taking no chances.

Mr. Lewis not only directed the union's strategy at the New York meeting, but set a date for a conference with T. T. Brewster, chairman of the operators' scale committee, to talk over the bituminous agreement. While he was keeping in touch with the rapidly changing situation, announcement came of the names of 125 coal operators and miners indicted by a special Federal grand jury in Indianapolis for allegedly conspiring to restrict the output of coal in violation of the Lever Act. Both Mr. Brewster and Mr. Lewis were among them. F. S. Peabody, one of the leading Chicago coal operators, was named, as was William Green, secretary-treasurer of the miners' union, and many other Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and western Pennsylvania union officials. Secretaries of trade bureaus and coal associations, too, were named in the indictments handed up.

Notified by New York reporters of the action of the grand jury, Mr. Lewis halted his conference on the anthracite situation long enough to say he did not fear an

investigation by any court of competent jurisdiction. On May 6th, he surrendered to the jurisdiction of the court, and bail was continued. Meanwhile, the operators filed separate bills of complaint in their various communities, asking that Attorney General Palmer be enjoined from prosecuting the indictments. The sections under which the presentments were returned, they said, were unconstitutional.

Charles Evans Hughes was retained as counsel to defend the officials of the United Mine Workers of America. He immediately attacked the constitutionality of the Lever Act, which was known in full as the Lever Food Control Act. With the promulgation of these regulations, Mr. Hughes said, the President assumed complete possession of the fuel industry, and no jury had the right to define what might be reasonable or unreasonable in connection with its conduct. The motions filed by Mr. Hughes, and by Samuel D. Miller, and James A. Bingham for the operators, attacked the indictments on three main grounds: constitutionality, the questionable operation of the Act, if it was legal, and the insufficiency of the indictment.

On May 26th, Judge Anderson held three sections of the Lever Act unconstitutional and quashed thirteen of the eighteen counts of the indictments against the 125 miners and operators.

Pleas of "not guilty" were entered by attorneys with but five exceptions and November 8th was set as the trial date. But the case moved back and forth monotonously for over two years and Mr. Lewis had to turn his attention to things of the moment.

Facing an impasse in dealing with the anthracite opera-

tors, he lashed out with his customary vigor. He announced a meeting of anthracite representatives in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, for May 23rd, thus giving the operators only a week to settle. A full wage scale committee of anthracite miners had been in conference with President Wilson and others in Washington and had received a proposal of arbitration which they planned to report favorably to the convention. Mr. Lewis was in Washington on May 20th, when the Matewan, West Virginia, riots occurred and twelve miners were killed in a battle with detectives. He wired Governor J. H. Cornwell a vehement protest in which he said that the companies' guards had assumed unwarranted police powers. He called for an end to the system of maintaining hired detectives who could kill without being punished, and said the blood of those killed would be "on the hands of those who failed to stay these murderous hirelings."

The American Civil Liberties Union in New York City wired a protest to the governor on the same day and asked him to re-establish law in Mingo and Logan Counties.

On May 24th, Mr. Lewis mounted a rostrum before the tri-district convention of the anthracite miners at Wilkes-Barre and advised the delegates to refuse the President's proposal of arbitration. He made his speech in the face of the fact that the scale committee which transmitted the offer was in favor of its acceptance. The miners passed a resolution scoring Judge Anderson of Indianapolis for calling Mr. Lewis back to Indiana in connection with the charges against him. Meanwhile the convention continued and finally came to an unsatisfactory end which could result only in outlaw stoppages.

There was dissatisfaction with the terms of the bitu-

minous award cropping out all over the coal-producing states, too. The situation was particularly bad in Illinois, where Frank Farrington was trying to make a name for himself and yet not gain credit for the national officers of the union. There was a coal-car shortage and certain classifications of workers were not given pay increases in the award made by the President's Commission. There had been a strike of switchmen, further complicating things, and as Mr. Farrington said, the men were working on an average of two or three days a week, while living costs had mounted to 143 percent above those of 1913. So a local strike occurred.

Conferences were being held frantically. First the operators met with Governor Frank Lowden, who said afterwards that the situation was acute. He asked the miners to go back to work and pledged the aid of every state agency. Mr. Lewis, from Indianapolis, said that the strike could not be settled if the agreement changed the basic settlement under which the men in the central competitive fields were working.

"Any modification of that agreement will bring about a strike of 210,000 men," he said. "Coal prices are terrible. Those daring commercial vandals, the coal barons, are selling coal in some cases as high as \$12.00 a ton, f.o.b. the mines."

The trouble, he said, resulted from the "lamentable blunder" of the President's Commission in not having provided adequate compensation for certain classifications of mine workers. It became known that President Wilson was considering sending a message to union officials concerning the serious stoppage in the Middle West, for soon fifty more mines in the Terre Haute area were left deso-

late in unauthorized strikes. In Kansas nearly 2,000 more men were out of the pits in protest of working conditions.

Disapproving of the strikes that had broken out, Mr. Lewis sent a request for a conference with Thomas T. Brewster, the spokesman for the operators. Blaming much of the trouble on Frank Farrington, the Illinois union leader, he said:

"The foolish attempts of the Illinois operators and Frank Farrington to make a local settlement in the coal industry have quite naturally come to a disastrous failure.

"The embarrassing position in which Farrington now finds himself could have been avoided had he adhered to the constitutional requirements and policies of his organization by consulting with his superior officers on these questions. The surreptitious and nocturnal activities of Mr. Farrington are meeting with an almost universal condemnation by the members of the United Mine Workers and the public at large. His feeble attempt to disregard the material welfare of the mine workers of the country in general, of course, cannot be sustained. I am advised that protests against his action are being filed by the local unions in Illinois."

Industries were closing, railroads announced they had but a limited supply of coal, and the situation looked like a repetition of the 1919 strike. Nearly all the miners in Indiana were participating in outlaw stoppages and another was threatened in Pennsylvania. Utilities warned that they would soon be out of fuel. In Illinois, Governor Lowden said organized society faced a crisis. But the Pittsburgh Coal Producers refused Mr. Lewis a joint conference of employers and employees and the operators of Indiana followed the example set. Both groups feared

the request was merely an opening wedge for new wage negotiations. Mine owners in Chicago met and informed Mr. Lewis that the miners had broken faith with the agreement made through the auspices of the Federal Bituminous Coal Commission. Until the miners went back to work, therefore, the operators would not consider any new agreement or modifications of the old.

This put the issue back in the gnarled and very capable hands of the now bellowing Mr. John L. Lewis. Declaring that the strikes were in violation of contract, he wired miners in Kansas, Indiana and Illinois to go back to work. President Wilson sent him a letter expressing his gratitude for the move. But the miners' leader knew he had insurgents within his ranks and sent a sharp telegram to Alexander Howat, the leader of the Kansas miners.

"A continuation of the course you are pursuing will condemn your organization and stamp you as a man devoid of principle and destitute of honor. The miners of Kansas through the incessant and continuous strikes which you have directly ordered or sanctioned are gradually being reduced to a state of poverty," Mr. Lewis wired. He added there were to be no more "whims and caprices" and that the Kansas miners would "not be sacrificed to a demagogue."

Mr. Howat telegraphed Mr. Lewis that he refused to abide by the instructions received, and said his leader's message was "a direct insult." "Furthermore," he said, "the cowardly insinuation you have made that I have called the miners on strike at this time is without the least semblance of truth and is in conformity with many other statements you have made."

On August 11th, President Wilson wrote the mine

leader a letter asking the various scale committees to confer in Cleveland, Ohio, with the operators. Meetings got under way on August 20th. The miners promised to try to curb the stoppages and Mr. Lewis immediately wired President Wilson the danger of a strike that winter in the Central soft coal fields had been averted as a result of the Chief Executive's suggestion of a parley.

"Certain differences now existing can be harmonized by agreement to be consummated in the several States," he told the President.

But the trouble had only begun. Solving the troubles between the mine owners and their employees was as hard a task as it would have been to serve as barber to Medusa.

Chapter Seven

"NO BACKWARD STEP"

August–December, 1921

COUPLED WITH THE protean evil of overdevelopment of the mines, lagging sociological conditions in the United States were forcing too many men into the pits, thus halting the progress of the coal industry towards efficiency and economy. The railroads were already discriminating against the union-mined coal, giving considerably lower rates to operators who wished to open marginal mines using serf labor. With this modern slave traffic, fostered from father to son by necessity, the railroads managed to get a considerable cut in their unit cost and to develop tributary lines for themselves.

But the operation of a system fostering uneconomic mines only accelerated the vicious cycle: more mines, more miners, poorer standards. With starvation wages in non-union fields came low-cost competition against the more progressive owners, which tended to cut profits and concessions to labor.

It was the natural outgrowth of the nation's leadership, both past and present, and the system of politics in a democracy that fought for slogans and not for men, unless, indeed, out of the pride of its leaders, it took up arms for foreign business men.

Under the slogan "less government in business," the

various administrations nurtured the dog-eat-dog principle, with labor the chief sufferer. When the workingmen protested, as they did repeatedly in the case of the mine workers, the alarm of "public interest" was raised against them and their leaders arrested. So generations lived and died in a country composed largely of laborers, a land devoted to the principle of majority rule, but a nation which concentrated on posterior injections of aid and dollars to capital. Labor was defeated by bromides and the fact that the life-blood of successful politics is the stuff that comes from campaign boxes.

Individual mine owners would face a situation where they had to stop playing golf long enough to explain that dividends were cut because of high costs as compared with operators who mined blood and flesh. But the way it was put was that the union forced costs up.

There was no mention of the fact that prior to the advent of the union a discussion of labor relations amounted to an excursion into the history of ancient and medieval forms of servitude under slightly different appearances and names. The same situation is in force in non-union fields today.

Coal prices continued to mount and thousands of sporadic movements were under way throughout the country as small groups sought to pledge householders not to buy their usual supply of coal for the winter until prices were reduced. There was no single organized campaign but rather individual appeals by civic and improvement associations in many cities.

Aroused by the situation, the magazine *The Survey* made an investigation of conditions and presented a symposium, presenting the views of John L. Lewis for the

miners and a statement by C. E. Leshner, Editor of *Coal Age*. The articles were preceded by an editorial note which said that one of the causes of the consumers' "strike" was the absence of an authoritative statement as to why the price of coal should be higher than twelve months before when retail prices of almost all commodities "were falling."

In reply Mr. Lewis said:

"There will be no reduction in wages in the organized section of the coal industry. The mine workers are now working under a scale of wages fixed by the United States Bituminous Coal Commission, created by the President and which functioned under Governmental authority. Those wage schedules were written into an agreement between miners and operators, which will not terminate until March 31, 1922. There can be no modification or abrogation of this agreement in any coal-producing district without disturbing the integrity of the contract throughout the entire nation.

"The United Mine Workers will resist any attempts to disturb the equanimity of its present contractual relations. The present acute depression in the mining industry, with consequent widespread unemployment and distress among the mine workers is not in any way attributable to the wage schedules now in effect. Production costs at the present time are such as to enable coal to be produced and furnished the consuming public at a price relatively lower than any other basic or essential commodity. Users of coal should not delay purchase upon the theory or with the hope that any reduction of wages will be accepted by the mine workers. Statements to the contrary have no basis in fact.

"In this statement I do not in any way defend the present market price of either anthracite or bituminous coal. I simply undertake to point out that there will be no change in the labor costs of production, under the present wage agreements, which will expire next year," Mr. Lewis continued.

"It is also true that in no previous statement have I undertaken in any way to justify the prices being charged by the coal operators. It is my opinion that coal can be produced under the present wage agreements in the coal industry, with a fair margin of profit to the coal operator, and still be furnished to the consuming public at a price that is relatively fair in comparison with other essential commodities.

"It is quite true that during the year 1920 many operators deliberately filched excessive profits from the pockets of consumers, which has justified in a large way the severe criticisms which have been directed against the coal producers.

"In so far as it has been possible, I have been trying to convince coal consumers that the wages paid for mine labor are in no way responsible for these reprehensible practices. It seems to me that the future price of coal will depend, to a considerable degree, upon the attitude of the consuming public. Production in the bituminous fields now approximates forty or forty-five percent of the normal output. Should this condition continue and users of coal continue to withhold purchases it will naturally result in a later demand when the railroads are unable to transport the tonnage. Such conditions will naturally create a runaway market, which will be intensified by the action of unscrupulous producers. Under such circumstances, one

can easily imagine a repetition of prices which prevailed during the skyrocketing of 1920."

And so there were "outlaw" strikes and rumors of strikes. But John L. Lewis respected an agreement once made and fought for integrity of existing contracts. He spared no blow against insurgents within his own ranks if the operators had adhered to the terms they signed.

The President and his Secretary of Labor, William B. Wilson had been attempting a settlement of the many differences in the anthracite area since the expiration of the agreement with the operators. New York financiers, who owned the mines but knew little more about labor than was necessary in order to get favorable balance sheets, were adamant and arrogant. There were commissions appointed, but as usual the report of the majority gave few benefits, while full cognizance of the inequalities under which labor suffered was given in the minority report. This paper would only be filed away in the dusty archives halls of Washington, D. C.

On August 29th, the representatives of 175,000 anthracite miners gathered at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and "took the bit in their teeth." After a stormy all-night session they sent the President a three-day ultimatum that he must accept the minority report or there would be a strike. Delegates, the instructed agents of the locals, stormed to the platform and openly declared that the officers of the union had outlived their usefulness.

"We want an immediate twenty-five percent increase in wages," they repeated again and again. "Our officers do not represent us, the members of the rank and file. Why should we not have a wage increase as high as the bituminous miners?"

One of the main grievances was the contractor system, under which the job of producing coal was "farmed out," resulting in competitive price cutting for labor and poor conditions. The coal operators and the central organization leaders made a determined effort to prevent a vote for a strike call, offering instead a plan whereby the Commission's report would be accepted, but with new demands.

But the miners refused to make concessions, even to their own leaders and the President of the United States. They voted to go on "vacation" until their demands were met. Insurgent leaders said "not a pound of coal will be mined until we receive our increase in wages."

The Scale Committee, however, accepted the minority award which had been approved by the President, and at Scranton, Pennsylvania, signed a contract with the Operators' Scale Committee that was to be binding for two years. The rebels continued to spread the a.w.o.l. movement until the hard coal industry was practically at a standstill. At one time there were more than 125,000 miners sitting in their hovels oblivious of the operator's whistles to begin work.

Since it was a strike not accepted by the national leaders and given no encouragement by them, various minor leaders gradually saw the futility of further fighting without the union power behind them and signed the pact, putting thousands of men back to work. When District Number One signed, the backbone of the strike was crushed. A few of the miners' skulls were crushed almost on the same date when sporadic disorders flared.

Meanwhile a situation developed where John L. Lewis could not limit himself to sub rosa strategy. When the

Alabama bituminous operators failed to live up to the terms of the agreement the men had quit spontaneously. After about six months the matter became so serious that Mr. Lewis called all the men in the district away from their work.

President Wilson received a wire from him, urging the commencement of legal proceedings by the Department of Justice to enforce the principle of collective bargaining in the South, where he said a state of war existed. The governor was maintaining eleven companies of the state militia in the coal fields, and the private policemen of the companies were having things their own way.

"Poverty in its most terrible form stalks through the mining camps of Alabama," Mr. Lewis wired. "There are the twin spectres of malnutrition and disease. Every conceivable instrument of oppression is being used against these people by the powerful interests associated in the coal industry of Alabama."

It was a strong charge, backed by a man who had made plain and truthful statements, and there was every likelihood, on the face of it, that the assertions were again true. But in the message there was no mention of the Court of St. James and of what Mr. Wilson could do to make the world safe for Democracy. There were no silk-stockinged ambassadors to Alabama and the miners could only plead, not flatter. There wasn't even a single Hun, and, of course, no powerful British propaganda forces to intrigue official Washington. Mr. Morgan's money was fighting this issue. Mr. Lewis would have to fight it out himself. The government could take no side.

As the nation went to the polls and Warren G. Harding was named President, the United Mine Workers of

America were making little marks and mailing them to re-elect John L. Lewis their leader. Robert H. Harlin, the State of Washington candidate for the presidency, was defeated by a majority of 66,730 votes. William Green was unopposed for re-election as secretary-treasurer.

Before an executive board session Mr. Lewis called attention to contracts in effect with the operators until March 31, 1922, but he bristled as he rumbled out that there would be no decrease in wages.

"The miner is not doing any more than subsisting on the wages and work he is now getting," he said, making it plain he realized the basic problems facing him were more than the mere matter of continued wage increases.

Reporters were told on the final day of the board meeting, March 25th, that more than 100,000 union miners had not worked since January 1st and the others were working only an average of three days a week. But it was pointed out that the figures did not include the strikers in West Virginia and Washington. Mr. Lewis said it was his belief that the unemployment situation was more acute than it had ever been in the history of the union.

The massacres in the fields of West Virginia were always enough to make Mr. Lewis darken like a cloud. On May 19th he went to Washington for a conference with Mr. Harding's Secretary of Labor, James J. Davis, to see what could be done.

Mr. Lewis made a strong representation that the trouble was being caused by private detectives in the fields. He said that the miners were willing to meet with representatives of the operators to work out an amicable settlement. After the conference with the Secretary neither Mr. Lewis nor Mr. Davis commented, but it was learned from other

sources that Mr. Davis had promised to try to bring about a peaceful settlement.

Admired by many, hated by hordes, but respected by all for his courage and intelligence and the results he achieved, John L. Lewis now was ambitious to take the next step: the presidency of the American Federation of Labor. Still at the till and the tender was Samuel Gompers, who first had seen that it was intelligence which kindled the light in the Lucas coal miner's eyes, and had made him a field representative of the Federation. Naturally Mr. Lewis did not relish running against the man who gave him his chance. But politics recognizes no parentage and the head of the United Mine Workers of America was the leader of the largest single organization in the entire unionization scheme.

He arrived at Denver, Colorado, a week before the convention opened in June. There was the usual vote buying and bartering to be done. Mr. Lewis was understood to have the railroad unions behind him and was believed to have a following of nearly 22,000 out of the 35,000 votes.

But he held off for days before he finally announced he would make the race. By this time Frank Farrington, the Illinois barb in Lewis' side, had come out flatly and a little less than tactfully to say that he would not advocate Mr. Lewis as president of the Federation. Robert Harlin, of Washington, and Alexander Howat of Kansas let it be known they would not support their chief, either. The most impartial of observers could begin to see the background of recent strikes emerge with greater meaning.

Once the decision had been made Mr. Lewis plunged into the campaign. He had a score or more of representa-

tives on the convention floor canvassing for him. It would be almost a miracle if he could defeat the veteran Samuel Gompers, who had been elected thirty-nine times to the position he held by securing substantial gains in wages and working conditions down through the years.

"The only hope for Lewis is to espouse what he calls 'progressive' policies," commented the *New York Times*, editorially. "Lewis is favoring government ownership and democratic control, old age benefits, health and unemployment insurance. As if this were not enough he makes a blanket statement for all other legislation that will 'give the workers and toilers of America the freedom and justice in industry they deserve.' "

On June 25th, Mr. Gompers was elected president of the Federation for the fortieth time. Only two large organizations stood solidly for Mr. Lewis and his own union was badly split. The final reckoning was 25,022 to 12,324. But the former Iowa boy thanked William Green, who had put his name before the convention, remarked that he had come a long way and "There is no rancor in my mind, I have nothing but respect for Mr. Gompers and am wholly satisfied with the action of the convention."

Back at his Indianapolis headquarters once more, Mr. Lewis was confronted by that jack-in-the-box of trouble, the situation in the West Virginia coal fields. Some of the miners had been deported after the most recent trouble there. Governor E. F. Morgan had proclaimed a state of martial law and many of the men had been arrested for unlawful assemblage.

"The men were gathered together to give and accept relief. Some of their families were starving. One very

significant feature of the case is that the militia has attacked only the miners," Mr. Lewis wired the governor. "It has not interfered with the coal operators association, although that association maintains an office, just as do the miners, and operators assemble there every day in connection with the strike. The coal operators are as deeply interested in this strike as are the miners. Certainly the military authorities should treat both sides alike. If the operators are allowed to assemble without interference the miners ought to have the same right."

His next move was an appeal to President Harding to call a joint conference of the men and their employers.

From Charleston Governor Morgan wired the President for more troops, fearing, he said, that there would be an attempt on the part of Mingo County authorities to free deputy sheriffs captured by the embattled workers.

But he also expanded the wire enough to put in an expression about Mr. Lewis.

"Lewis has not made a large contribution in trying to prevent civil warfare in West Virginia or to aid the constituted authorities in suppressing defiance of these authorities," he said, pointing out that armed miners were still running around the hills. He made no mention of the human trait of gun shyness upon being shot at only once.

"I am more than willing to join Governor Morgan in any sincere attempt which he may make to prevent civil war in West Virginia," replied John L. Lewis from his Indianapolis office, "and I will lend aid to the constituted authorities in securing respect for the State and Federal laws. Governor Morgan can disarm and disband this private army of thugs if he will and if he is really sincere

in the desire to avoid civil war in West Virginia he will do this."

Mr. Lewis then wired local union heads in Mingo County that the men were to disperse. Notifying President Harding of this action, the miners' leader said, nevertheless that he would not be responsible for what went on but would cooperate for peace.

In his Labor Day address he pointed out the background and necessity for collective bargaining and called upon the United States troops to disarm the guard in the West Virginia fields.

His attention now was diverted to the convention of the union, because he expected trouble from Robert Harlin and Frank Farrington. He opened fire on them as soon as the roll call was taken and in a stinging rebuke charged both men with circulating false statements about the union. When Farrington answered him, saying that the issue was one of autonomy in state leadership, and Mr. Lewis had invaded the realm under his control, the president merely demanded an itemized account of \$27,000.00 spent in the Illinois strike.

As he talked of fighting pay cuts and ham-stringing the enemies of labor, of keeping the full power of the union behind their policies, Mr. Lewis had one eye cocked in the general direction of Alexander Howat, the wily Kansan, who had been sabotaging the Lewis régime with strikes of a very embarrassing nature, in violation of contract. Mr. Howat had never learned how to fight a dictator.

The leader charged to the center of the platform and thundered out a recommendation that Mr. Howat be instructed by the convention to direct strikers to return to work. Mr. Lewis contended there was only one issue:

whether the union could expect its men to carry out contracts. Howat, on the other hand, said that the operators intended to change working conditions from those specified in the contract and that Mr. Lewis was siding with the mine owners against the rank and file of the Union. The convention was in a turmoil, but when it came to a vote the delegates smeared the belligerent gentleman from Kansas and ordered him to direct his men to return to work. He declared openly, with customary lack of caution, that he would "do no such thing."

There was, of course, a chance that Mr. Howat would realize his mistake and change his tactics in time to make him a valuable leader of the men in Kansas. There is no way to hang a man in this country for merely saying what he will or will not do; Mr. Lewis merely showed that he expected obedience, then waited for the outcome.

On October 31st, another bombshell was tossed at the union by Federal Judge Anderson in Indianapolis, who granted an injunction against the checkoff system of paying dues. (Under this plan the company deducts the union dues from the pay check of the employees and remits them to the union directly.)

Mr. Lewis immediately threatened a strike of both anthracite and bituminous miners if the operators attempted discontinuance of the checkoff. He sent a telegram to heads of local unions saying such an attempt would be regarded as breaking existing contracts.

The American Federation of Labor rallied gallantly to the fight. Samuel Gompers issued a vitriolic statement from Washington, saying that "such injunctions as that handed down by Judge Anderson against the United Mine Workers will cause a revolution in the ranks of

organized labor." Such decisions, he went on, would force the working people to take matters into their own hands, no matter what the outcome. It was not exactly the birth of the philosophy that Labor should be felt politically in order to be a burning weight in this country, but the words were strong.

Counsel for the miners announced that they would apply at once to the Circuit Court of Appeals for suspension of the temporary injunction pending a hearing of the case. Frank Farrington, from his office in Illinois said that the November 1st telegram from Mr. Lewis was passing the buck to the state leaders. Mr. Lewis regretted, he said, that Mr. Farrington was the only one of the seventeen district chiefs who could not understand the message. The Chicago Federal Court of Appeals heeded the petition of the union counsel to suspend operation of the injunction and Mr. Lewis promptly telegraphed district leaders to keep their men in the mines provided the operators carried out terms of the contract, including the checkoff. The action in other fields depended upon the reaction of the operators to suspension of the dues remittance system.

It was plain that another large-scale fight loomed so Mr. Lewis decided to "purge" his organization. At a meeting of the Executive Committee held in Pittsburgh on November 17th he testified against Alexander Howat and a group of his Kansas radicals. A few days later the official order was filed that erased their names from the union rolls.

Mr. Howat and the others expelled sought a writ of mandamus to force Mr. Lewis to reinstate them bringing suit before Circuit Court Judge Dew in Jackson County,

Kansas. On December 20th, John L. Lewis testified that the ousted leaders had been given every chance but had failed to obey the instructions of the Executive Committee in that they had called an illegal strike, a violation of the contract with the owners.

It was a stand that cost him popularity and aided the campaign of his rivals within the organization, especially in view of the fact that the Kansas Industrial Court sent Mr. Howat to jail and thus made him a martyr to some. But Mr. Lewis stood firmly by his guns, although he realized that the outcome might imperil his control over the organization.

"The United Mine Workers," declared Mr. Lewis, "regards a contract as a sacred obligation. It will abide by its agreements."

From the history of the union it was apparent that some attempt should be made to get the operators to consider a new agreement in advance of the expiration of the old. But all overtures were turned down coldly by the employers' associations. On December 27th, the Southern Ohio Coal Association at Columbus notified the union that its executive committee would not meet with them, and two days later the Pittsburgh Coal Producers Association also declined. The Pittsburgh Vein Coal Operators' Association of Ohio made a similar announcement a little later.

It had been a very busy year, and certain parts of it had been very sad. Mr. Lewis had been named to the President's National Unemployment Conference and to another committee to investigate governmental administration of veterans' relief, a group which coordinated the far-flung setup for hospitalization of disabled soldiers of

the World War. In addition to the tremendous weight of his union leadership, he also had served as a member of the advisory committee to the Limitations of Arms Conference.

The sorrows of the year were epitomized by the death of the Lewis' first child, Margaret Mary. And there was the grief of the split in the union that may or may not have been caused by Mr. Lewis' acts of omission or commission. While he always tried to show a sure hand, there must have been times when privately he wondered if he would have not, given a chance to do it over, execute things a trifle differently. There was a fight ahead, too, but the history of the union seems to show that Mr. Lewis rather enjoyed a real lively scrap.

Chapter Eight

CASKETS IN HERRIN

December, 1921—June, 1922

THERE WERE MEN in the miners' union who advocated everything from socialism, making sure it was a peaceful variety, to revolution and handing the country over to Russia on a silver platter—with watercress around the plate.

At one of the numerous conventions one of these men whose political complexion was a deep maroon asked permission to address the delegates.

"Bill," replied the president, "you can go out there and talk your head off if you want to. But the minute that you start ripping the Constitution of the United States up the back or start advocating the cause of the Soviet government, in fact, the instant you start pulling anything with the slightest shade of red about it, I'm going to interrupt you and chase you off the platform."

"Bill" was considerably huffed for the moment. But he knew "John L." meant exactly what he had said and would have personally hurled him out of the meeting. When he talked he was on the record according to the rules. That was the Lewis attitude of the moment against "dangerous radicals" and if it has changed somewhat since, there were many to feel the weight of his disapprobation then. He had expelled "radicals" before and his fight with Alexander Howat was rapidly approaching a climax.

On January 14th Judge Dew ruled from his Jackson County, Kansas Circuit Court bench that the President of the Mine Workers was justified in removing Mr. Howat from control of District Fourteen of the union. But that did not mean the organization had heard the last of the Kansan. He and Frank Farrington began to contact local union delegates to the coming Indianapolis convention, which movement the Lewis scouts in the field reported, of course. But the leader did nothing about it, turning his attention to a battle with the operators who had refused to negotiate.

He appeared before the Shamokin, Pennsylvania, anthracite miners' convention and announced in a fiery speech that the miners would accept nothing less than a twenty percent increase in wages. The delegates gave him a rousing vote of confidence and unanimously endorsed the ouster of Mr. Howat.

His next move was one that startled heads of the labor movement. He proposed an alliance of coal and railroad workers to resist attacks upon existing wage scales. In a few hours the leaders of two railroad unions indicated interest in the proposal and soon fourteen other unions asked to be allowed to confer. The movement took shape within the succeeding few months.

When the convention of the miners opened in Indianapolis on February 15th "the air was full of dead cats." John L. Lewis was booed and hissed when he stood up to reply to Mr. Howat, who had charged that "the machine is trying to crucify me." Too late came the realization that Mr. Howat and Mr. Farrington, those two arch-bogey men, had taken advantage of the general threatening situation in the industry, the hours and weeks and months of

unemployment, and had turned in some "missionary work of hate." The delegates, by a vote of 977 to 864, refused to sustain the presidential ruling that Mr. Howat had no standing before the convention.

It was John L.'s first setback, and enraged, he leaped to his feet to brand Mr. Howat a "Red." He fought with all his fury, pouring out such an impassioned speech that the following day the convention rejected a proposal from Frank Farrington that the next order of business be taken up. The vote was almost unanimous. Then Mr. Lewis shouted out that 125 Kansans were on the convention floor to cause a disturbance and impede the orderly procedure of business. He charged further that an organized plot of terrorism had been carried on for ten days against him.

"Day after day," he continued dramatically, "and mail after mail, I have been receiving letters telling me that unless I resign it has been decided that I shall die."

He leered like a Barrymore at a first night.

"Anyone so cowardly as to mail threats is too cowardly to carry them out," he intoned as he worked the grimace.

One of the letters, he revealed, was mailed from "Bush Terminal, New York City," and addressed "To the Traitor of the Working Class." It said:

"We have been watching you since you became president of the United Mine Workers of America, and we see that you have been always on the side of the exploiting class, so we came to the conclusion at our secret conference that we make an end to it. And this is up to you—that you resign as soon as you get this letter or you are going to be assassinated."

Mr. Lewis did not bother to send out for bodyguards. The delegates that Mr. Howat was keeping off the floor

for a "surprise" sent word to Mr. Lewis that they wished to be "regular" once more, and when it came time they trooped in, actually 150 strong. When he was ready to force another vote on his ruling to oust Mr. Howat, Mr. Lewis found that the delegates were substantially behind him. So he wrote *finis* temporarily to l'affaire Howat.

On March 20th, Mr. Lewis announced the miners would attempt to open wage negotiations with the operators. But after several days of correspondence with Samuel D. Warriner, president of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company of Philadelphia, the spokesman for the operators, the offer was withdrawn. The owners were not warm to the proposition. There was a dangerous possibility that individual settlements might be effected, especially by Frank Farrington, who delighted in "autonomous action."

"Single state wage agreements between union coal miners and operators, such as proposed by Illinois operators, are impossible under the policy adopted by the United Mine Workers of America at their recent convention," Mr. Lewis announced in Indianapolis on March 3rd. He advised Illinois union officials to reject such a plan, characterizing it as "an inherently selfish policy," and "economically unsound," that "contains no elements of consideration for public welfare."

Union officials indicated that while the message was directed to the Illinois union leaders it applied to all sections where individual state negotiations might be proposed before a settlement had been reached for the Central competitive field, comprising Illinois, Ohio and Western Pennsylvania.

Simultaneously it was announced at the White House

that government officials attempting to bring the miners and operators together before the wage agreement expired on April 1st were doing nothing "except in a suggestive way." President Harding was already interesting himself in the situation, for on March 7th he reiterated his belief that the miners and operators should get together. He informed Secretary of Labor James J. Davis that his department should insist on both parties to the existing contract observing its provision for a meeting of operators and miners to renew the agreement before its expiration. Informed of President Harding's attitude favoring a conference of miners and operators, Mr. Lewis said that union officials were willing to confer with the operators of the Central competitive field at any time or place.

The Executive Board of the United Mine Workers of America also notified Frank Farrington, president of the Illinois miners, that it was unalterably opposed to efforts towards negotiating single state wage agreements with operators within the Central competitive field. Mr. Lewis made public a letter of protest from W. K. Kavanagh, president of the Coal Operators Association of the Fifth and Ninth districts of Illinois, who criticized the stand against single state wage negotiations. When Secretary of Labor Davis broke the silence he had maintained, and urged the operators and miners "in the name of common sense to get together and save the country from the costly results of strike," Mr. Lewis immediately replied that the union would welcome the meeting and that hope of averting the strike rested with the operators.

Secretary Davis said the government had no desire to interfere unduly, but "has a duty to safeguard the interests of the people who will be seriously affected by the sus-

pension of coal mining." Mr. Lewis again said he was ready to parley but that the first conference must be held between the miners and the operators of the Central competitive field. In St. Louis both miners and operators of the Illinois field expressed willingness to attend any conference that Secretary Davis might call except Frank Farrington, the unpredictable Illinois union leader, who expressed skepticism as to any good that might come out of "interference by the Government at this time."

Formal ratification of articles of alliance between union coal miners and railway workers were adopted on March 8th in Indianapolis by the Executive Board of the United Mine Workers, following a convention of railway workers in Chicago where Mr. Lewis made an impassioned speech in favor of the plan and won a vote of approval and support. The board, according to dispatches at the time, did not discuss any connection between the alliance and the threatened strike on April 1st, since the miners' head had previously informed the rail chiefs their membership would not be expected to join in a sympathetic stoppage.

Frank Farrington, from St. Louis, continued to grimace towards his union chiefs, and said that the Illinois miners would enter negotiations with the operators of that state in the event the international board of the union failed to bring about an inter-state conference of the four states in the Central competitive field.

Meanwhile from his vacation headquarters in Florida, President Harding announced that the Administration would take steps to prevent a tie-up of industry and would be prepared to take drastic action in case of a strike on April 1st in the bituminous coal fields. Even if the operators could not be induced to meet the miners and agree

upon a new wage scale, persons close to the Administration stated that President Harding and the cabinet had evolved a plan to keep the mines open so as to provide coal for essential industries, households, and railroads.

On March 14th, with New York as his ultimate destination, Mr. Lewis exchanged views on the bituminous coal situation with Secretary Davis at Washington. Both believed a bituminous strike was inevitable. Mr. Lewis again assured the Secretary of the willingness of the miners to meet the operators for a discussion of a new nation-wide wage pact. The union leader told Mr. Davis that the cessation of work in union mines after April 1st was coming about automatically and he asserted a bold commercial policy of the operators for which the public must pay was in part responsible.

"If there is no conference between the miners' union and the operators," he said, "there can be no wage contract drawn up. If there is no wage contract there won't be any coal dug after April 1st in union mines."

Mine operators' associations which had sought district contracts were accused by Mr. Lewis of playing for position. "Operators in certain districts," he said, "would like to get an exclusive right to the coal market after April 1st when all other mines are shut down." Wage contracts could not be signed, he said, until the basis of a national scale had been made by a wage contract in the Central competitive field.

"This will determine the wages and costs their competitors have to meet, and will fix the relationship to the coal market," he pointed out.

Meanwhile he charged, "coal companies plan to make a lot of money by refusing to enter conferences, getting out

strike scares and frightening consumers into paying high prices for coal." He submitted an ultimatum to the operators, including nineteen proposals for wage increases and better working conditions. The owners met at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City and leafed through them, but were not impressed. After a short session in thick cigar smoke they announced that a decrease in the cost of coal was imperative and that readjustment of wages downward was the first step in reducing cost to the consumer as well as in insuring stability to the industry.

An order calling for a strike of the 600,000 workers in both hard and soft coal fields was already being drafted by the international officers of the United Mine Workers. Mr. Lewis said he would call a meeting of the Policy Committee within a few days to arrange the final details for the walkout.

"The refusal of the bituminous coal operators in the Central Competitive Field to confer with the workers on a new wage agreement, and the lack of sufficient time to negotiate a new contract for the anthracite men will inevitably force a suspension of the mining industry on April 1st," he said.

The text of Mr. Lewis' gloomy prophecy and his militant strike preparations had scarcely been printed when the owners in the hard coal mining branch of the industry decided that perhaps, after all, there might be some merit in talking things over. A sub-committee of four operators and four miners was named, with Alvin Markle of the Jeddo-Highland Coal Company as chairman without a vote. W. L. Connell, of the Green Ridge Coal Company, Samuel D. Warriner, of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, W. L. Richards of the Philadelphia and Read-

ing Coal Company, and W. W. Alden, of the Glenn Allen Coal Company were to represent the operators.

The miners selected John L. Lewis, William J. Brennan, president of District Number One, Thomas Kennedy, of District Number Seven, and Christ J. Golden, head of District Number Nine. Philip J. Murray, international vice-president of the union, was authorized to sit in at the conferences for Mr. Lewis at any time. The meetings were to begin March 21st. On March 18th the miners announced that the strike order would be acted upon by the union Policy Committee meeting in Chicago or Philadelphia probably during the last week of the month.

The official order for the strike, in which 3,000 locals would participate, was mailed by Mr. Lewis from New York City. Only the provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were to be exempt. Negotiations were already under way there. The strike order provided that a total of 10,000 men be left at the mines to "guard against floods and other property loss and to insure the proper care and protection of all mining property." There were not to be strike benefits to the miners, Mr. Lewis said, but he promised that the union would "take steps to provide for all needy members." This was an exaggeration of course. No such high sounding promise has ever been carried out in a large scale industrial stoppage. What he meant and what he did was to see that the union provided as best it could. It was and is a powerful union, able to aid a great deal more than most. Mr. Lewis was only using another stock phrase he had inherited from his predecessors.

On March 23rd the union machinery was grinding, resulting in the customary grist. A delegation from the American Federation of Labor, headed by James Lord,

president of the mining department, called on "John L." in New York and offered him the full support of organized labor. They issued a statement saying the Federation "stands with the miners, come what may." Then they rushed back to give the latest details on the situation to Samuel Gompers. The General Policy Commission of the union came all the way to Cleveland, Ohio, to stamp with approval all that Mr. Lewis and the other officials had done. They suggested that they knew a way to include 200,000 non-union miners in the stoppage. In Cleveland, himself now, Mr. Lewis held a conference with Warren S. Stone, grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, who made public his offer of aid, both as a private citizen and as head of the railway brotherhood.

William G. Lee, president of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, arrived and there were reports of imminent conferences between the mine chief and other heads of the "Big Four" railroad brotherhoods. Mr. Lewis announced that it was not his intention to call on the railroad workers for sympathetic strikes. He adopted this stand despite the fact that earlier in the day officials of the West Virginia miners submitted a resolution adopted by all the shop crafts of the Norfolk Western Railroad in which they urged their international officials to permit them to strike with the miners or to refuse to move non-union coal.

From his Illinois stronghold Frank Farrington showed his usual forensic turbulence. He first denounced the strike order, since he was trying to get a separate state agreement for his men. Then he remembered that his men were members of the United Mine Workers of America, too, and said he would call them all out on

strike. A few hours later he had determined that the Illinois miners would still be striking even if the general strike crumbled.

"We have no intention of bolting the organization," he said. There is no record, unfortunately, of the attitude of the reporters who may have been assigned to follow Mr. Farrington's announced thoughts. But what is more probable is the supposition that the city editors, knowing Farrington, failed to cover him at all and waited for that worthy gentleman to call up the offices and reverse himself each edition.

Soon after the strike call Mr. Lewis hurried to Washington and appeared before the House Labor Committee and urged that Congress appoint a tribunal to investigate mine labor and output. But he went on record as strongly opposing Federal price-fixing of coal. During the hearing he was questioned at length by Congressmen. The interrogation was friendly until a representative of the State of Texas, Congressman Black, began a series of questions which partook of the nature of heckling.

"Would not your demand for a six-hour day add \$245,000,000.00 a year to the national coal bill?" he asked.

"I am unable to follow your mental gyrations," replied Mr. Lewis, "or to ascend with you into your mathematical realms. However, it would not."

There was a titter about the room and the complexion of the Texas Congressman turned several shades towards crimson, but he kept on.

"I understand," he said, "that the wages of the miners have been increased no less than seventy-five percent since 1913."

"Mr. Black," answered the miners' leader, "the miners

of the United States are gifted with a number of talents but they cannot eat percentages."

At this hearing Mr. Lewis explained that the anthracite workers had gone on strike merely to await the results of peaceful negotiation, but that the bituminous workers were out indefinitely to obtain the signing of a basic wage contract. His explanation was in reply to a query of Representative Black as to why the union would not settle with the operators in states and districts where work could be resumed under satisfactory conditions. Mr. Lewis insisted that competition would not permit the operators to fix wages locally without knowledge of their competitors' wage scales.

"Miners," said the union president, "know that they cannot hope to get more than 215 days work a year as things stand and that part-time operation tends to increase year after year. If private industry cannot work out this problem, regularize employment and stabilize outputs, it may be necessary for the Government to assume the burden."

He suggested the creation of an investigation bureau, but said it should not have wage or price-fixing powers. He came out strongly against group wage distinctions.

"Business interests," he said, "should not be allowed to play off the interests of one group of employees against another in their period of economic depression, because it would result in the wage levels being fixed by the necessities of the hungriest and least fortunate group."

Arguing for higher wage levels he added: "The theory that business can be stimulated by lower wage levels, that labor can be still further deflated, aside from its inhumanity, is entirely fallacious as an economic argument. All the

policy does is further decrease purchasing power; make men unwilling to buy at any level of prices, because they are constantly urged to wait for still further drops. It checks enterprise by inducing investors to put money into bonds instead of into business."

He expressed the belief that business leadership in America was "keyed up to acceptance of a do-nothing, waiting policy, while millions of workers are kept unemployed." He suggested that the men who had enjoyed war profits end the suspense and let it be known that stable price levels had been reached. This was the man who, twenty years before, restricted his economic excursions to the generality that miners were not getting paid what they should. He knew because he was one. But now he was holding the spotlight of attention in America and telling the law-makers how business should be conducted.

He was recognized as a man who knew whatever subject he talked about thoroughly. It was a mighty achievement, and if at times there was a note of pride in the leader's attitude and speech, there were always some to defend him because of his background. He personified the American tradition that a man is what he makes himself, impeded only by our self-imposed economic dictatorship. It was to protest the form of that rule and suggest changes that he appeared before the governing body.

An example of the manner in which the consumer was milked on coal prices was given a group of New York newspapermen when Mr. Lewis visited the metropolis on business. He pointed out that the operators had admitted coal cost them only \$3.92 a ton at the pit mouth.

"But you back up a wagon at the mouth of a mine and they demand \$7.50 a ton for it," he shouted. "The \$3.00

the railroads ask for bringing a ton of coal to New York is sheer robbery, too. Coal marked \$10.50 a ton here should, at best, cost only \$7.00 a ton. The public cannot ask the miner to submit to robbery."

He pounded the table before him.

"This strike is for the workers to recover their share, which the robbers have taken."

The attitude of the public was as usual, that of the farmer who has not yet experienced the sensation of having the horse stolen. The newspapers carried very little about the matter on front pages. The security market kept up its remarkable advance. The *Review of Reviews* suggested that perhaps the apathy was due to the extensive discussion of the situation in March. But there was a change in the public opinion as to who might be responsible for the strike. The *Review of Reviews* said:

"Accusation that the operators deliberately broke their agreement to go into a national conference that might have agreed on wages became important when Secretary of Labor, Hon. James J. Davis, joined labor leaders in reproaching the employers for bad faith and when many leading organs of public opinion asserted that the failure to live up to the agreement showed that the operators were, just as the miners claimed, choosing this time deliberately to break the power of the union and stop collective bargaining."

Mr. Lewis maintained that coal prices were too high. In June he set off a broadside against the "fair price" agreement which had just been fixed by Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover by consent of the operators. The leader of the miners made a point of the fact that the maximum price of \$3.50 allowed by the Secretary was

\$1.05 more than the war-time maximum allowed the operators.

"It is anything but a fair price," Mr. Lewis said. "And on top of that the operators have reduced some of the non-union miners' pay fifty percent and want to reduce the union man's wages."

Evicted mine families knew what it was to have Death strike undernourished children in the heart of winter; West Virginia miners were clay pigeons for the guns of coal company deputy sheriffs. Silicosis, dread occupational disease, gripped the life breath of thousands of diggers and hundreds of impoverished families had tuberculosis as a permanent, withering guest. To fill the gap caused by a revolt at frequent intolerable situations there marched the scab, at higher prices. Strikebreaking was a risky, as well as a despicable business, and that is why higher wages were paid. The very fact that operations could go on at these inflated pay schedules indicated to miners that all their economic troubles could be obviated if the operator were less greedy and there were no short-sighted laborers to cut the collective throat of regular workers.

But just as silicosis and tuberculosis were occupational diseases among the miners, lead poisoning, a very sudden attack with sound effects, was that of the strikebreaker. It has been human weakness, even in lawful society, to fight murder with murder, and in a strict sense, strikebreakers in the coal fields were murderers. No one could say truthfully, the miners felt, that a man helps a murder just a teeny bit, and thus becomes ever so slight a murderer. If you help in the slaying you are in on it, and strikebreaking is per se evidence. There is no need for trial. It is war.

And war it was when on June 21st, at Herrin, Illinois,

miners surrounded the strip works of the Southern Illinois Coal Company and fought it out with strikebreakers. There were casualties on both sides, and when the strikers finally captured some of the scabs they hung them. It was very primitive murder, not as neat, as say, the executions of women in New York State's electric chair, where everything is arranged and done on schedule, with paid observers. But it was done just as finally. Coal mining, like starving to death, is a primitive business.

There is a general thought that dictators bring on war, and there were many people to howl "Dictator" at John L. Lewis. They recalled that State Senator Sneed, a sub-district officer of the miners at Herrin, had sent a request to Mr. Lewis for the status of the Shovelmen's Union, which was cleaning and loading coal in defiance of the strike. A wire had come back that the shovelmen's group was an outlaw organization and that members of it had taken part in breaking strikes many times before.

"You are justified in viewing its men in the same light as any other strikebreakers," said the miners' leader.

It was murder that bred murder, and the Herrin miners really needed no one to point out the enemy. After the massacres, in which some of the strikebreakers were clubbed to death and some were hung, with a total of thirty deaths on both sides, there were numerous trials, during which the union supplied funds to defend its members. Just as a family might not condone murder by one of its members but would nevertheless defend them when at trial, so did the union react.

Chapter Nine

FRESH, PRINTABLE HISTORY

June, 1922–September, 1923

NOW BEGAN the "Red" nightmare. At a tri-district scale convention of the anthracite workers, held in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in June, Mr. Lewis singled out T. J. McCarthy and Joseph Manley, and charged they were agents of Communist William Z. Foster. Mr. Manley was identified with the Trades Union Educational League and Mr. McCarthy represented the Labor Defense Council. Mr. Lewis charged they were attempting to disrupt the meeting. The two men were hustled to the street and badly beaten up. Mrs. McCarthy, who was with them, escaped injury.

Declaring that "the industrial buzzards have been removed," Mr. Lewis called the convention to order again and prepared a demand for a twenty percent wage increase. Both actions were typical of him and the assent of the delegates was the same bovine approval that he almost always had been accorded. It seemed to be a Lewis routine, a sort of 1920 swing-time movement, Red baiting, Red hating, "twenty percent more wages must be had," and applause from the "voters."

Continuing his relentless campaign against the radicals Mr. Lewis again showed the iron hand in July at Atlantic City. He telegraphed a revocation of the charter of Dis-

trict Number Twenty-six embracing the Nova Scotia, Canada, bituminous fields. He suspended District President Daniel Livingstone, District Vice-President Alexander McIntyre, and District Secretary-Treasurer J. B. MacLachland, charging that they were intriguing with the Soviet government. Mr. Lewis set up a provisional leadership in the district and instructed union miners there to return to work. They must call off the strike, he said, "for it is unauthorized."

Pointing out that the international union was entirely willing to be just to capital, he notified the British Empire Steel Corporation, against whom the unauthorized strike had been pending, that the international union had assumed the existing joint wage agreement. In a scathing letter to District President Livingstone, Mr. Lewis wrote:

"I have in mind that you are a self-proclaimed revolutionist. I am familiar with the constant intrigue between yourself and your evil genius MacLachland, and your revolutionary masters in Moscow."

It became bruited about generally that President Harding admitted "off the record" that the country was "at the mercy of the United Mine Workers." This of course, meant Mr. Lewis, and the New York newspapers pounded him editorially.

The lusty Mr. Lewis hardly had time to read all the clippings, and he never, or almost never, answered the attacks. He was too busy making new, fresh printable history from day to day. He maintained that the operators deliberately forced the strike in order to break the mine workers' union and force the diggers back into cooliedom. He resisted all efforts, and there were many of them, to

get a settlement plan other than by a direct conference and a direct agreement between the employers and those to whom they paid wages.

"There is just one way to settle this strike," said the fast-traveling union head, this time from a New York hotel room, "and that is by the joint conference method. It is the way the strike will be settled, regardless of what anybody says, thinks or does."

This attitude of Mr. Lewis received the support of the Public Commission on Coal, an organization with headquarters in New York City, which issued a statement on the same day as the Lewis ultimatum. The Commission pointed out that "the sending of troops to the mines" does not solve the people's coal problem.

"What the industry needs today," the statement continued, "is rather the vision of the engineer than the bayonet of the soldier."

Copies of this statement were sent to President Harding, Senator Borah and other members of Congress.

President Harding told the coal operators of the country to return to their properties and resume the production of coal under the bayonets of militia. The Chief Executive wired the governors that all mines employing strike-breakers were to be guarded. Then he proposed a plan under which arbitration was to be compulsory. Naturally such a plan would have removed the only weapon the miners had: the strike. They rejected it and even the operators accepted only in principle.

Ten days later Mr. Lewis pointed out that there had been no increase in coal production. Not that the governors of the various coal producing states had not done all that was expected of them. They had supplied troops, Mr.

Lewis said, but that was not the way to get the miners back.

When the Interstate Commerce Commission declared "an emergency exists in the coal situation," and restored priorities for coal shipments, Mr. Lewis was still adamant. There would be no settlement that would injure the prestige or the effectiveness of the union. There would be no step backward. He showed little concern over announcement of plans for the importation of British coal. This, he indicated plainly, was merely a gesture. It was costly and would never be practical. For one thing, American miners were getting out three times the number of tons a day that British miners were able to dig. Call it what you would, the figures proved it.

"Not a single miner has returned to work throughout the length and breadth of the land," said Mr. Lewis. "It must now be obvious to all that the American miner will not be driven back to work at starvation wages and under non-union conditions by any fanfare of trumpets or vain military display."

Mr. Lewis was unsparing in his criticism of the Harding coal policy, despite the fact that he was generally recognized as a Republican in national politics.

"The lamentable breakdown of the Federal coal policy," he said, "naturally lessens the desire of the public for further experiments of this sort. The public is primarily concerned with its future coal supply. Time is an important factor. The mine workers are resolved not to be driven back to the mines by a threat of force and neither do they intend to return until the coal operators of the country are required to meet them in joint conference in order that a new wage scale may be negotiated.

"The principles of collective bargaining are at stake and the right to employment at a living wage is an issue which must be considered."

Still holding his ground, Mr. Lewis had lunch the following day at the White House with President Harding and Secretary of Labor Davis. After many hours of conference Mr. Lewis was firmly against a settlement except on a basis of a national agreement on the old Central competitive field basis.

As an evidence of good faith that the miners desired to see a speedy end to the strike, Mr. Lewis on August 1st extended the olive branch through an invitation to the operating interests in the Central competitive field, which includes Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, proposing a joint interstate conference at the Hollenden Hotel, Cleveland, for August 7th. He outlined the parley's purpose as, "negotiating a basic agreement designed to terminate the present suspension in the mining industry."

At the time the strike was in its eighteenth week and Mr. Lewis said it was "unparalleled in its magnitude, and constitutes an industrial convulsion which menaces the financial and social fabric of our nation."

"The making of a basic settlement in the Central competitive field," an accompanying statement pointed out, "will permit of an immediate following settlement in all the outlying bituminous coal districts and should pave the way for an immediate adjustment in the anthracite coal fields as well."

Then followed a note of warning: "Those who block the success of such a conference by refusal to participate should therefore be made to bear full responsibility for the

continuing situation." The invitation was immediately followed by a reply from A. M. Ogle, president of the National Coal Association, in which he said, "Mr. Lewis' attempt now to dictate is not only ill-timed but entirely discredits his profession of solicitude for the public welfare and industry." The Coal Association executive flaunted the proposed four-state conference, which he called abortive and replied that the offer to negotiate in each individual state was still open.

Despite the statement of Mr. Ogle, which was augmented and elaborated upon by executives of lesser importance, the operators affected wavered, and finally showed up at Cleveland. Mr. Lewis arrived there on the evening of August 6th and predicted that the soft coal strike would be ended by the conference to begin the following day. He also intimated that he might offer the operators a settlement embracing several states not in the Central competitive field. And in all of his points he won a sweeping victory. But he said the victorious miners would not humiliate the operators.

In the opinion of two of his progressive leaders, however, Mr. Lewis was letting himself in for humiliation later on. Powers Hapgood and John Brophy charged that their leader had abandoned nearly 75,000 non-union miners of Western Pennsylvania, most of them in fief to the United States Steel Corporation. These men had walked out spontaneously when the strike began.

Mr. Lewis had spent a great sum of money for the relief of these diggers and their families, but he did not, he could not as a business unionist, risk a good contract by insisting upon "too much." John Brophy insisted that the men should be permanently organized, and that no con-

tract should be signed with an operator unless he signed a similar pact for his non-unionized mines.

By this time the United States Steel Corporation had bought 100,000 acres of coal lands in West Virginia and Kentucky alone. The United States Steel and Coke organization bought miles more of the land. The union was a synonym for a cuss word there, and the company tacked up wage-cut signs at the pit heads whenever its officials felt it would be a good idea. Some of the miners would have had to walk nine miles in order to get off company property, before attending a union meeting. Mr. Brophy had the right idea, but he might as well have asked for the millenium, and Mr. Lewis knew it.

Having disposed of the bituminous situation, Mr. Lewis showed less belligerency and late in the month he agreed to confer with United States Senator George Wharton Pepper regarding the anthracite strike. Senator Pepper was recognized as the personal representative of President Harding. Samuel Gompers was also pressed into service as an intermediary. On August 26th, Mr. Lewis and Senator Pepper had their first meeting in Philadelphia and from that time on things moved quickly.

Convinced that the hard coal miners had won all they could obtain, Mr. Lewis worked night and day in the interests of a settlement and on September 6th, with only twelve locals in opposition, the union head announced he was sure the Pepper peace plan would be overwhelmingly ratified at the tri-district convention that would open later that day in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

After months of nervous strain the leader blurted out:

"I have been out on the firing line. I have given my best and have no apologies to make. I am now going to rest

and recuperate. I pray to God that you will adopt this agreement."

A thunderous cheer and a unanimous vote were the reply.

With both hard and soft coal strikes out of the way, the leader of labor now turned to entrenching his stand against any attempts to cut the wage scale for the bituminous diggers. On November 3, 1922, he announced a special assessment on the membership to yield \$2,000,000. He made it plain that all the money would be used to fight for a continuation of the existing wage scale for another two years after the contract with the operators expired on April 1, 1923.

The union war chest was not needed to finance a bituminous strike in 1923, however, as the 1922 agreement was renewed for another year. This enabled Mr. Lewis to cross the ocean for a short trip in which he combined recreation and business meetings with British and other mine leaders. The conference in England followed a visit to Brussels, where the American mine chief attended a miners' gathering. On his arrival in London on April 23rd, Mr. Lewis was reticent as to his purpose in the Continental visit. According to reliable reports from England, he was constantly under the surveillance of detectives acting under orders from American interests who sought to learn the underlying purposes of the foreign trip. During his London stay Mr. Lewis conferred with Frank Hodges, secretary of the Coal Miners' Federation of Great Britain and other leaders of that organization, but he studiously avoided receptions or other public appearances. Upon his return to New York, Mr. Lewis would talk only briefly to ship news reporters.

"The miners of this country are out of the habit of accepting wage cuts," he said. "I think I am probably the first man to return from Europe within the last three or four years who has no panacea for all its ills."

Greatly buoyed by his rest abroad, Mr. Lewis was soon back in harness again. He attended the tri-district scale convention of delegates representing 155,000 anthracite miners, held in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and by virtue of being elected permanent chairman saved the meeting from possible disruption. Rinaldo Cappellini, president-elect of District Number One had promised to "raise Hell." But Mr. Lewis walked up and down the platform with his fingers looped in his vest pits and combined sound effects with fierce mane tossings. He dared some one to start something, in effect.

It became just another "Lewis convention." Even young Cappellini went to the president and said he was "for the administration" and "wanted to go along." The gist of the president's message was that the delegates should receive with open minds the appeal of the United States Coal Commission for cooperation in the settlement of the details for a new anthracite field contract.

The victory march went on as Mr. Lewis received the honor of being named to the chairmanship of the joint conference of anthracite mine operators with their employees at Atlantic City on July 6th. It was the first time that a representative of the miners had ever been chosen for the presiding chair. Samuel D. Warriner, of Philadelphia, president of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, spokesman for the operators, offered Mr. Lewis' name in nomination. A second precedent was smashed when the meetings were thrown open to the press.

The miners presented an eleven-point program of demands, which included unconditional recognition of the union, twenty percent increase in contract wages with a two-dollar increase for all day men, and a contract for two years. The conference went on for nearly three weeks and Mr. Lewis finally presented an ultimatum on the part of the miners. He demanded recognition of the union, the checkoff and the closed shop. The parley, begun so amiably, became stormy and a number of acrimonious verbal passages took place. The operators objected to the check-off and closed shop as illegal and monopolistic. Mr. Lewis replied warmly that he and his associates objected to what he termed a reflection upon their citizenship.

An impasse was reached when the operators voted down a union resolution which would have adopted the three main union demands. When John C. Brydon, chairman of the special commission of the National Coal Association, attacked the checkoff, Mr. Lewis countered with the charge that "non-union operators are plotting to provoke a strike of union miners in the soft coal fields next spring." Mr. Lewis said the existing situation was not much different from that of the preceding spring when, he asserted, the non-union interests induced some of the important soft coal companies to join them in refusing an agreement to the United Mine Workers, precipitating the six-month suspension of work by 300,000 mine workers which resulted in a national fuel shortage that winter. In the event of another national strike, he said, non-union operators would have the coal market to themselves and would make large profits.

John Hays Hammond, the chairman of the United States Coal Commission, which had just been established by the Administration, asked the two parties to resume

their meetings on the grounds that the public might suffer if they did not. Mr. Lewis accepted the invitation of the Commission to meet its members in New York City and acquaint them with the points at issue between the union and the employers. In accepting the invitation Mr. Lewis made it plain that he was not retreating from his previous stand and that complete recognition of the union must be made and the checkoff system must be granted before negotiations could proceed on the wage contract.

He met the members of the Commission and then went to Atlantic City for the resumption of talks with the operators, on August 21st. But the leaders deadlocked again, this time because the employers rejected all attempts to discuss higher wages. Both sides remained on the ground but Mr. Lewis in behalf of the miners rejected all suggestions as to arbitration.

"We told them," he said, "we didn't propose to submit the wage scale to the hazard of arbitration, having in mind the astounding and totally unfair award of the arbitrator appointed by President Wilson in 1920."

Astonishingly conciliatory at the beginning of the parley, the old Lewis battle spirit blazed up again as the leader said:

"Time for mincing words has gone by. The mine workers are prepared to enter an industrial contest September 1st and to administer to the operators the most complete trouncing of their career. Since the anthracite operators intend never to recede or compromise on any point of working conditions or wage matters except after a defeat our people will go into a fight.

"We make no request to the Coal Commission. We look for no help from any agency, governmental or other-

wise. The mine workers have always found reason for dissatisfaction with arbitration awards in the past. . . .”

Without further waiting Mr. Lewis began to lay out his battle lines and to consider the possibilities of allies. He summoned James Marks, vice-president of District Number Six to Atlantic City. It was from the soft coal regions that a large part of fuel substitutes were to be obtained in the event of an anthracite strike in accordance with the plans of the national administration which was now in the hands of Calvin Coolidge. Coming as it did almost immediately after announcement that the government would seek a steady supply of hard coal substitutes in the event of an anthracite strike on September 1st, the conference was regarded generally as highly significant. But Mr. Lewis said the purpose of the conference was a discussion of internal policy. Mr. Marks was as silent as an oyster, referring all inquiries to Mr. Lewis. The district represented by Mr. Marks produced an average of about 60,000,000 tons of soft coal a year, the greater part of the supply consumed in the East. Although confined to his room by a heavy cold, John L. Lewis continued to direct the battle and on August 26th he approved the issuance of a work suspension order to become effective at midnight, August 31st.

Mr. Lewis was attacked by many newspapers at this time, a typical editorial headline being “Our Dictator.” It all depended, of course, upon the outlook of the individual editor on trade unionism. John Llewellyn Lewis offered a broad pair of shoulders as a target if one was needed.

“As he rightfully considers himself to be, in effect, the United Mine Workers, he naturally concludes that the

country is at his mercy," said the *New York Herald*. "Louis XIV never made a more majestic assumption that he was the State. The president of the United Mine Workers, it is true, seeks to make it appear that he is a benevolent tyrant."

The newspaper said Mr. Lewis was no dictator for life and that it was only a temporary emergency that "has seemed to grip the country by the throat."

Which was one great daily's conception of the labor movement, and where it would lead.

"His monopoly is sure to be broken, and his dictatorship certain to be trampled in the dust, as soon as the American people find leaders to show them the ways and means to do it."

Prophecy.

As the army of anthracite miners, 158,000 strong, laid down their tools in a quiet and orderly fashion on September 1st, they pledged solemnly that they would follow their union head to the end. From all corners of the coal fields there were reports that police were not needed. Many newspapers and magazines called the strike just and there was a favorable change of opinion towards the miners. There was not a single charge of "communist" flung at "John L." and many magazines backed him, personally.

One of them, *Current Opinion*, hailed Mr. Lewis as the "pacific leader of the striking miners" and a "labor leader who stands four square for the Constitution," one, "who will not tolerate Bolshevism or any shade of Red on the part of his followers." The magazine added:

"Whether the coal miners win or lose the strike in which nearly three-quarters of a million of them are reported to be engaged at this writing, their leader, John L.

Lewis, is on record as declaring his followers to be 'Americans who will not fight the Federal Government.' In other words the president of the United Mine Workers of America, reputed to be the most powerful labor union in the country, is not a radical and is said to be intolerant of radical methods. More than once he has acted without hesitancy in situations that involved authority of the government."

Under the caption, "Red Efforts to Win Our Biggest Labor Union" the magazine quoted much of the United Mine Workers of America report "exposing" communist activities in America. It continued:

"Once more the curtain rises on a Russian plot to seize the reins of government on this continent. The biggest union in the United States, the United Mine Workers of America 'after an independent, searching investigation' announces that 'the seizure of this union is being attempted as the first step in the realization of a thoroughly organized program of the agencies and forces behind the Communist International at Moscow for the conquest of the American continent.' Already, we are told the Communist organization in North America 'is composed of more than 6,000 active leaders and lieutenants, and approximately one million members, adherents and sympathizers, scattered in every state and province of the United States and Canada.'

"If successful, the plan to make a 'Red' henchman of every holder of a union card would swell the army to more than four millions. The ultimate object of this move, according to a lengthy report given to the press by the United Mine Workers of America, is 'the overthrow and destruction of this government, with the establishment of

an absolute and arbitrary dictatorship, and the elimination of all forms of popular voice in government affairs.' ”

“Its enemies have learned in the past year that organized labor cannot be destroyed,” Mr. Lewis said in a Labor Day message. “The past year has been filled with trials and vicissitudes due to a constant attack by powerful interests and influences, but they have learned that the trade union is a legitimate, American institution and that the American public has given its full approval to the idea.”

Samuel Gompers pledged the full support of the Federation for the striking anthracite miners. He denounced the owners and said they had forced the walkout by insisting upon unacceptable conditions. There were indications that the operators were about to make some concessions and when Pennsylvania's Governor Gifford Pinchot suggested a conference they accepted. Within six days after the strike was called the operators and the miners had settled their differences at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Under the terms agreed upon, but which had to be ratified by the membership of the union directly involved, a ten per cent wage increase was granted to all classes of laborers and the eight-hour day was to be in effect. Mr. Lewis praised Governor Pinchot for “the present happy termination of an unfortunate situation.” It was the shortest strike in the history of the union and, according to the leader, one of the best contracts the anthracite workers ever had won. He felt sure the membership would gladly accept it.

In conference with Governor Pinchot, Mr. Lewis agreed with the pro-labor executive that the Interstate Commerce Commission should investigate anthracite coal freight rates.

"The Governor," Mr. Lewis wired President Calvin Coolidge in support of the suggested investigation, "has placed his finger with unerring precision upon the method by which the consumers of anthracite may be given substantial relief from present excessive prices, and the possibility of a future increase."

Chapter Ten

THE JACKSONVILLE AGREEMENT

September, 1923–December, 1924

HE HAD WON consistent victories, both within the union and without. He had held to his slogan, No Backward Step!

That was the national situation for John L. Lewis. But he knew that while the union officially would never accept anything but an increase in wages and a betterment of working conditions, the employers were chiseling on their agreements. The membership of the United Mine Workers was exhausted from too much fighting and too many "victories" that never led to a permanent armistice. Mines lay idle. The coal market shrank. As the vice of uneconomic competition tightened on the operators, oppression of the pit men increased. Money that should have gone to needy miners' families went to arm and maintain arrogant company thugs, through fear and a sense of guilt on the part of the employers.

All this was an old story to Mr. Lewis. He had done tremendous personal research and had an experienced corps in the field learning facts. He threw out the chaff of prejudice in his people's reports and penetrated with an unerring skill to the rich lode of basic truth. He had "arrived." He was a significant leader now, almost ready to cast off his first thick layers of intolerance. He knew

more than any other man in America about the coal industry. And he realized that the union was headed for internal disruption and numerical weakness unless conditions changed. He compiled a report to be delivered later that stressed the necessity for a wage agreement for a term of years so as to obviate strikes or any other suspension of production. He was able to view the matter from a long range, although, quite naturally, not from a pure objective viewpoint.

The shadow of those bleak Herrin, Illinois, riot coffins again fell across Mr. Lewis' path, and he was called upon to comment as the various investigations proceeded. He consistently maintained that the sad happenings transpired solely because "strikebreakers" were digging in mines during a general strike. John C. Brydon, president of the National Coal Association and chairman of the Bituminous Operators' Special Commission, took the miners' president to task, saying that he was responsible because the massacre could be traced to the policy of the leaders.

As was expected, the hard coal miners ratified the Pinchot agreement when they met at Scranton, Pennsylvania, on September 17th. The contract gave them ten percent increase in wages, recognition of the union, and the principle of collective bargaining. The eight-hour day was stipulated. Mr. Lewis told the delegates that their organization "is the greatest fighting machine in the history of organized labor and the most perfect trade union the world has ever seen."

Then he returned to Indianapolis to prepare for the union's biennial convention to be held there on January 22, 1924. Friends of Alexander Howat were preparing to fight for his reinstatement as Kansas head of the organ-

ization and there were several important changes to be made in the union's governmental procedure. Wage demands to be presented the bituminous operators as a replacement of the contract expiring April 1, 1924, were also to be decided upon.

In his annual report to the convention Mr. Lewis stressed the need of long-term agreements with the employers in order to restore stability to the industry and relieve the "coal-strike wearied" public. He let it be known that there would be an active organizing campaign in the non-union mines of the soft coal fields and that there would be no backward steps in the matter of wages for the diggers. On the second day of the meeting he revoked the charter of the Nova Scotia union, with the announced reason that it was because the local had accepted a thirty-seven percent wage cut. He was upheld in his action by a large majority, although many delegates believed he took his action because of alleged Communistic activity in the Canadian branch.

Repeated tests of strength showed President Lewis was much weaker on issues of internal union politics other than revolutionary unionism. His motion against the "Reds" of Nova Scotia won by 1,600 to 300. But he was outvoted in a first test of the question as to whether local executives and organizers should be appointed by the national officials or by the rank and file. The insurgents, headed by the deposed Alexander Howat and spurred on by the members of the Ku Klux Klan, who exerted a lobbying influence from the convention doorways, combined to carry the first vote. On a roll call, however, the square-cut, brow-furrowed leader managed to win by a vote of 2,263 to 2,106. Control of the organizers would

have presaged the capture of power by the radicals in the near future.

The radical insurgents did not scorn to invoke the principle of "democracy" in seeking a change to local balloting for the election of organizers. On the question of wage scales and contracts the Scale Committee was authorized to meet the bituminous operators at Jacksonville, Florida, on February 11th, get the best contract they could, and to try to make it a four-year agreement. The long contract would be one of the greatest accomplishments of the union, according to Mr. Lewis. The coal industry, he said, required a period in which it could stabilize itself and the union would profit, too, for whatever wage scale was fixed, "the very worst would be the best that ever prevailed up to that time." Naturally, he said, the country as a whole would benefit from the certainty of a coal supply.

Pacing up and down the platform, tiger-like, one hand hanging in the armhole of his vest, a typical pose, Mr. Lewis kept his deep-set eyes roaming the packed floor below him. It was his convention and he knew it. But there were times when he had to defend himself against savage attacks. He was challenged on having given up the demand of the anthracite workers for the checkoff system.

"If I retire tomorrow it will be with consciousness of having served you to the best of my ability," he said.

Heckled on his battle with Reds, he replied:

"If I understand the policy of the United Mine Workers of America, it is against dictatorships in any form, no matter who the dictator may be."

He was applauded on that answer.

As one delegate from the South drawled it, "The Big Boy is sure goin' to town."

The discussion concerning accepting members of the Ku Klux Klan into the union continued with heat. James L. Dunlap, colored delegate from Madisonville, Kentucky, said that if the union rescinded its previous action refusing admission to the Klan there would be "nothing else for Negroes to do but to organize a union of their own." Then the radicals who had combined with the sympathizers of the hooded order to strip Mr. Lewis of the power to appoint organizers finally broke away and attacked the Klan themselves. John Hindmarsh, of Peoria, Illinois, who had led the insurgents, rose to say "the Kluxers have always stood with the employing interests." So grimy coal dust would never smear the whiteness of clan bedsheets officially, anyway. The movement was defeated.

The secretary to the convention read a resolution aimed at cutting down attendance at conventions. It provided that representatives should have one vote for one hundred or less members of their locals and one additional vote for each one hundred members or a major fraction of that number. No delegate, however, was to have more than five votes. But the clause that tended to cut the convention size read that no local union should have more convention delegates than would be necessary to cast their entire ballot by entrusting five votes to a representative.

The roll call on the resolution showed that it had been favored in a close contest. Mr. Lewis made the announcement. Feeling was so intense that wild disorder was precipitated, lasting for over an hour. There were repeated demonstrations against the leader, but he stood there like

the Rock of Gibraltar and looked more able to withstand buffeting. Finally he hurled defiance in these words:

"May the Chair state that you may shout until you meet each other in Hell, and he won't change the rule!"

The convention had concluded its work except for action on the appeal for reinstatement of Alexander Howat. The report of the Committee on Appeals and Grievances said that Howat had been suspended for insubordination and violation of the union's constitution in that he had resorted to a civil court before exhausting the means set up by the organization to secure reinstatement. It was also charged by the committee that Howat had been guilty of "dual organization." His other activities, the committee said, convinced them that "he is not sincere in his expressions of love for the union."

Despite a ruling that he had no standing in the convention, the former president of the Kansas District, urged on by the shouts of his followers, ascended the rostrum and tried to address the delegates. When he refused to take his seat Sergeant-at-Arms James McCormick and an assistant threw Howat bodily off the platform. As he dropped to the foot of the stairway leading to the stage, Howat was caught between his followers, who tried to rush him back to the platform, and the crush of the administration's supporters, who wished to put down any disorderliness. Blows were exchanged and at least a dozen delegates staggered to their seats, noses streaming with blood, clothing torn, their cries of anger still echoing among the rafters.

President Lewis banged his gavel for order and was booed by Howat's friends, applauded by the others. The vote on the committee report was taken by a show of hands

and Howat lost his appeal. His friends leaped to their feet demanding a count and a roll-call. They were jeered by the other delegates. Mr. Lewis raised his gavel high above his head and declared the convention adjourned. The Howat sympathizers shouted "Mussolini" at him and recalled that he had said the union was against dictators.

As the main body of delegates left the hall they cheered their president. With Mr. Lewis at his side, "John L." held an impromptu reception on the stage, shaking hands for over two hours.

"The work of the miners' convention represents the triumph of conservative trade unionism over the destructive communistic influences which are spreading their pernicious propaganda," he said.

And Mr. Howat?

The Kansan said ruefully that there was but one course left; he must "go back to the mines" and fight his way back to the office of president of the District step by step. He declared he had not been given a fair trial.

When the Central Competitive Field operators met with representatives of the union at Jacksonville, Florida, on February 11th, Phil H. Penna, an Indiana operator who had formerly been international president of the miners, was expected to be the leader of the employers. He opposed Mr. Lewis at whose side he had sat in many a conference, and after the miners' leader had made a short address, Mr. Penna said it was "a masterpiece."

"It was an honest, reasonable, and straightforward presentation of the mine workers' side of the case," he said. "Above all things it was conciliatory. If those kind of statements had been made in 1919, at the Baltimore conference, there would have been no strike."

The miners asked for the same wages as provided for in

their existing contract and the owners opened the debate with a proposal to put the wage scale back to that of 1917. A joint committee of eight miners and eight owners was selected to consider the new wage scale. There were two from each side representing each of the four states of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania, which made up the Central Field. There was a desire among the operators to yield to the miners on maintenance of the existing scale but they balked at a four-year contract, which the miners sought under their Indianapolis instructions.

John L. Lewis passed his forty-fourth birthday around a conference table and ate his lunch from a paper carton.

On February 18th, both sides approved a three-year contract providing for the old wage scale. It was regarded as another victory for the diggers, since the operators insisted for days that they would never sign a paper binding them to those high wages for more than one year.

As Mr. Lewis returned to his offices in the North he gazed out of the windows of the chair car at the miners' homes he saw. They looked like barracks for economic warfare. The shanties leaned over as if intoxicated by the smoke and fumes of nearby mills. The more pretentious ones boasted a porch, but with broken banisters, presenting all the aspects of a snaggly toothed old ogre.

He noted that complex social wrongs and smouldering discontent the miners necessarily feel in the feudal surroundings is hidden from the casual person's eye. None knew better than he that sometimes this feeling would break out and cause little wars to preëempt the headlines and bring on government intervention. The next step, he recalled wearily, was that whatever investigation was conducted ended in a volley of recrimination, while the seeds of the next conflict were resown in the troubled soil.

He knew, too, that there were countless small mine cities back in the valleys and gorges threaded by little railroads that the average American never sees. He thought of the loneliness of these mine families and their sense of helpless subjection to the great corporate powers that exercised dominion no private power should have over a citizen anywhere, particularly not in America.

He made a scratch note of the following:

"But this power has not even been used intelligently, or beneficently. It is a national peril when that power is used to lower the material and spiritual stature of the people. At any time it is contrary to the genius of a free citizenry."

Then he thought of the insecurity of tenure in a miner's home and how the rent problem faces the head of a family, even placing a burden upon the minor members of the family. They must keep up a semblance of good behavior or their father will suffer at his pit job.

"Is it any wonder that the ultra-radicals hope to find in the coal mines patient listeners for every panacea, no matter how fatuous, when he promises them surfeit of sorrow? Nationalization of mines is a mild demand from such a people. The miner is not seeking arbitration—merely his rights. He has heard the reports of governmental and impartial agencies until his brain is reeling, all of the reports showing that something should be done, but lacking any power to do it. The miner merely wants the kind of citizenship that enables him to control his own affairs, the civic liberty that is the proud boast of every American, the freedom that should be the inherent right of everyone in this land."

Those words he would incorporate, in part, into a book. He would call it, he thought, *The Miners' Fight for*

American Standards. He would work on it as he found the time and have it ready in 1925.

"There is an element of comedy in the high sounding titles in most over-manned executive staffs of mine companies," he wrote. "Five or six coal salesmen drive that many autos to sell a bit of coal to one small dealer." He marked that there should be consolidation of smaller companies. But, he thought, all the small companies would want to have their value appraised at the inflated figure represented by their "watered" stock, and he realized that mines are property which diminish in value every year. It would be difficult, he knew.

"But whenever the preponderance of management fully comprehends the human equations involved in mining coal, when proper equipment is generally installed, overhead minimized and management makes every effort to hold the markets for union-mined coal by aggressive marketing strategy, they will find most of the problems that beset them now rapidly assume a purely historical interest."

Who will deny that he used a remarkable restraint in appraising that part of the coal industry's problems?

He decided there would be a defense of the checkoff system; a discussion of the failure of union substitutes, such as the cooperative organization, and the company union; the history of the United Mine Workers' progress in dealing with the employers; a refutation of the idea that miners do not wish mechanization of mines; a presentation of facts and suggestions on the burden of uneconomic freight rates, and a chapter with an eye to the future.

He set to work with zeal on the section dealing with the checkoff.

"The system is the traditional way for the miner to pay

any debt he owes. It started with the operators, who checked off money for rent, insurance, house coal, taxes, the company store bill, hospital charges, compressed air, carbide, cotton, oil, squibbs, detonators, medicines, powder, dynamite, batteries, and even Red Cross contributions," he noted. "The bituminous fields have the system and there never has been a single resolution introduced against it in ten years of constitutional conventions of the United Mine Workers."

When he thought how the hard coal barons had hired Walter Gordon Merritt, arch enemy of labor unions, to construct a psychological scenario featuring them as the defenders of human rights and liberties in "saving" the miner from paying his own union directly, efficiently and promptly, Mr. Lewis darkened up and began to storm.

While Mr. Merritt claimed to be a friend of the workingman, he had spent a lifetime in the best clubs by fighting the laborers' organizations. His press agency was available at slightly higher rates than the other mimeograph boys along Broadway. It was not Mr. Lewis, but another well-known leader who first insisted that Mr. Merritt was French and that his self-consciousness forced him to drop the portion of his name that made it "de Merritt."

At Washington, D. C., on April 12th, Mr. Lewis estimated that 65,000 miners were unemployed because of the inability of the operators and the various mine officials in the Central fields to reach agreements on the basis of the wage scale recently negotiated. An additional 10,000 men in southwestern Kentucky quit work when their truce expired a few days later.

"All these men are out of work because the operators have refused to accept the agreement," said Mr. Lewis. "However there is, and there will be no shortage of coal as a result of the stoppage."

After making this statement, aimed at keeping the price of coal down, he conferred with President Calvin Coolidge regarding a successor to Federal Judge A. B. Anderson of Indiana, who was to be promoted to the Court of Appeals.

A few days later as reporters asked him for an interview he discussed the changes in the soft coal industry and astounded some of them with his knowledge of the state of flux existent. He mentioned the gradual closing of marginal and uneconomic mines to correct the vicious cycle of overproduction, intermittent employment and restive labor. He pointed out that the coal production industry was in a transition stage between human and mechanical power, the transformation of the laborer from a prime mover to a machinery control.

He said that fair wages come from increased productivity and so it walks hand in hand with mechanization. Naturally, he said, the miners wish mechanization of the mines, not only because of a reduction of the physical toil they must now endure, but because with machines comes prosperity. In China, for instance, he pointed out, cheap labor makes machines too costly, whereas in America the employer who resorts to hand labor when machines are available will soon be lost by the wayside. American producers once were so far ahead of the world that with their machines for aid they could lay rice down on Shanghai wharves cheaper than it could be produced in China, he said.

"From the ranks of dissatisfied labor have come many of the important patents of today," he bellowed. "Just because there was a reaction on the part of displaced hand laborers in England at the outset of the industrial revolution 150 years ago it has become customary with the superficial to say that labor opposes mechanization. This idea was born in the age of ox carts and that is where it belongs."

He was ready with quotations from one of those innumerable Coal Commission reports that never went into effect.

"Machinery should replace hand loading," he read from a dead report. "There should be distribution of [coal] cars. There should be improvement of the work of the individual miner through standardization of equipment."

The development of low-cost operations would eliminate uneconomic mines because "only solvent companies can undertake the improvements that are necessarily different in each mine," he said. "While labor costs are about seventy percent of the expense of producing coal, there is sufficient margin remaining to force the abandonment of mines where fair wages cannot be paid. Stripped to its essentials the present crusade against the union and the existing wage scales is nothing but an effort to prolong the life of uneconomic mines which cause overproduction, too many miners, and too much grief to the public in coal shortages and high prices through strikes forced by miners who know their rights and demand them."

He suggested long-term agreements, which "would demonstrate to the public that the industry itself is making a sincere attempt to place its house in order."

Most of this material he later placed in his book, adding:

"The union insists that introduction of loading machinery and so on will make no difference on the human side as now expressed in wage scales, working conditions, and union relationship. The mechanical changes cannot be used to impair those standards. The miner should not be called upon to finance directly or otherwise, by a sacrifice of pay or working conditions, this new departure in equipment.

"Payment, by all economic canons, is the capitalist's duty, for he gets the rewards, the rewards of risk. Labor demands and will enforce the right to such consultation in the period of mechanization as will prevent the sacrifice of its standards."

Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, was quoted as saying:

"Mr. Lewis is more than a successful battle leader. He has a sound conception of statesmanship, of long-view interest to the people and the industry he serves."

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From Indianapolis on June 14th, the International Executive Board of the United Mine Workers suspended the autonomy of District Number Seventeen, which included nearly all of West Virginia. The action was taken at the request of the district and sub-district officers, who filed a petition asking the international officers to take charge since the national policies were not being "applied and enforced with sufficient vigor." Percy O. Tetlow of Ohio, a national official of the union, was placed in command of the area by Mr. Lewis and Van A. Bittner of

Pittsburgh, an international representative, was sent to the troubled northern section of the coal fields. Mr. Lewis' next move was to announce that the new leaders would not accept reductions, either, and there was nothing to be gained by making such offers. Strikes were occurring in other sections almost daily as the operators refused to put the terms of the Jacksonville, Florida, agreement into effect.

While the political pots were steaming for the national campaign, Mr. Lewis, a Republican, announced that he would vote for Mr. Coolidge. He was thoroughly criticized by Norman Thomas, the perennial Socialist candidate, who had a large following among the miners. The very able and extremely intelligent Mr. Thomas took a cut at Mr. Lewis that has set a pattern for Lewis' critics for years.

"The Republicans and Democrats are welcome to this type of labor leader," Mr. Thomas said for publication. "His actions are in accordance with his record . . . he has kept office by working one of the most arrogant and autocratic machines in the field of labor. Through the use of highly paid and clever publicity he has persuaded the more gullible of his members that he was chiefly responsible for winning the miners' strike of 1922. Why . . ." And he shot the labor leader full of darts dipped in pale red ink at the very best fountains of knowledge.

Despite this attack, which in the echo was greatly affected by comma blunder before it was hurled again by Mr. Lewis' many other enemies, the labor chief was endorsed for Secretary of Labor when Mr. Davis announced that he desired to resign on March 4th, as the new Presidential term began. At the American Federation of Labor

convention held in El Paso, Texas, the Order of Railway Telegraphers suggested Mr. Lewis and Shipping Board Chairman T. V. O'Connor, who had been mentioned for the position, endorsed the miners' union head instead.

"I am not a candidate," Mr. Lewis commented when he heard that a resolution had been introduced which asked the convention to request President Coolidge to appoint him to the Secretaryship. And he refused to discuss the matter any further. There was too much to do. He wanted Warren S. Stone, head of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, censored for not paying union wages at the Coal River Collieries in West Virginia, which Stone and others of the Brotherhood owned. Why should a brother trade unionist, Mr. Lewis wanted to know, be allowed to fight trade unionism?

When he heard that there was a movement to squelch his resolution criticizing Stone on the grounds that it would be "washing dirty linen in public," Mr. Lewis bellowed that if the reports were true he was prepared to debate the issue at length. He made the challenge and there were none to take it up. He strutted back and forth before the cream of American labor leaders and showed he really was king among them. His methods were those necessary to accomplishment among these men, and John L. Lewis knew that the man who could adapt himself to the situation he faced was the man who would win.

"This affair is a disgrace to organized labor," he said. And so he got what he wanted, and he got more than he asked. Pressure was brought to bear and American Federation of Labor contacts went forward to secure conferences with Stone. Although Mr. Lewis later had to

denounce Stone publicly, the fight was progressing as well as could be expected at this stage of affairs.

After the convention closed in Texas, Samuel Gompers led a delegation to Mexico City and the Pan-American Federation of Labor meetings. Mr. Gompers was stricken seriously ill on December 5th. He knew that complications due to the infirmities of his age would set in and he wanted to die on American soil. A special train was chartered and Mr. Gompers reached San Antonio, Texas, eleven hours before he passed away. When he knew death was approaching, he had himself propped up and shook hands with as many of his old friends as he could. Then with a smile he turned and said, "Well, nurse, God bless you. This is the end."

And the "grand old friend of the workingman" was gone.

"The passing of Samuel Gompers constitutes a distinct loss to the nation," said Mr. Lewis who was at his Springfield home. "He devoted a long life to the service of humanity, bringing rare talents of leadership to the task. His life record of half a century of effort may be read along the pathway of human progress. He was a stalwart champion of American ideals and a valiant defender of the country's rights."

The funeral was at Tarrytown, New York. A few hours later the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor met at the Elks' Club in New York City to select a new President of the Federation. James Duncan, first vice-president for thirty years, told the other eight members of the council that he should have the position in order to round out his career. But he was turned down. So he immediately resigned, though action on the resigna-

tion was tabled and the election went on. Matthew Woll, second vice-president, the favorite "son" of Gompers, was a candidate, as was William Green, secretary-treasurer of the Mine Union. Thomas Rickert, president of the United Garment Workers, presented the name of Mr. Green and he was elected when he received seven votes. There were two not voting. One of them was Mr. Green and the other was Mr. Duncan, who said, "I'm going to leave organized labor."

Chapter Eleven

COMPETING WITH SERF COAL

December, 1924–April, 1925

"WE HAVE IN THIS COUNTRY over half of the coal of the world," said a prominent publication. "There is no lack of good machinery and willing miners to bring it out of the ground. And yet for generations there have been constant disorders and even bloody conflict in our coal areas, particularly Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

"The problems of the coal industry cannot be solved by the operators alone, or the engineers, or the public alone. They present probably the greatest challenge to constructive thinking and cooperative effort that is now before the American people."

Although those words were written three years before, they were just as applicable in 1924. More than 12,000 employees of the Pennsylvania Coal Company had been ousted from the union for an unauthorized strike and after a stormy session by their General Mine Grievance Committee, representatives of the men tried to enlist the aid of other groups in an outlaw stoppage of the hard coal industry. Many employers were cutting wages from the accepted standards and the movement was spreading for a general repudiation of the contract.

Rinaldo Cappellini, president of miners in the district, informed of the action, immediately warned local unions

that in the event of a strike they would lose their charters and memberships in the United Mine Workers of America. He attributed the strike proposal to "the whims of a few disgruntled leaders who are trying to instigate trouble for their own selfish ends."

Mr. Lewis soon injected himself into the situation in an effort to avert a general strike. A special meeting of the executive board of the district was immediately called at Scranton, Pennsylvania. Working by telegraph and telephone Mr. Lewis announced his backing of President Cappellini, and urged the miners to remain at work pending settlement of their grievances. District Presidents Kennedy and Golden also announced that they would agree to the miners' request to call a special meeting of the Anthracite Board of Conciliation as soon as work was resumed by the strikers of the Pennsylvania Coal Company.

With the approval of Mr. Lewis, Cappellini issued a statement that "the day has come when our laws and our contracts must be respected by our membership, and any local union which does not through some reason comply with the laws of our organization and contracts made by our organization cannot be a member of our organization."

Thus the leader was showing his authority through Cappellini, who only a few years before was regarded as one of his chief enemies. Business men of Pennsylvania appealed to Governor Pinchot to intervene while a special committee was quickly appointed by John L. Lewis so that an investigation of the miners' complaints could be made. The investigators arrived in Scranton, Pennsylvania, just before the dead-line set by the would-be strikers. Cappellini, full of fight, said he would revoke the charters of

any locals answering a strike call. Members of the ninety local unions continued to meet in their respective headquarters and ballot on the strike proposal. The firm stand of the leaders had its effect, despite the intolerable conditions faced by the men.

Late on the night of January 20th, President Cappellini announced the breakdown of the general strike movement of the General Grievance Committee, stating that with the exception of the strikers at the Pennsylvania Coal Company mines, every local from Forest City to Shick-shinny, eighty-eight out of the ninety unions in District Number One, had voted to obey the request of the union leaders and oppose a general walkout. He predicted the early end of the Pennsylvania Coal Company strike and said the individual delegates would cast their votes against a tie-up of the 60,000 workers at the meeting on the following day.

True to his prophecy, the General Grievance Committee took that action. They also agreed to meet the International Union's committee in an effort to settle the stoppage at the Pennsylvania Coal Company mines. In a few days the strikers agreed to return to work. By a firm use of his power Mr. Lewis had averted what might have been one of the most serious tie-ups in the history of the hard coal branch of the industry. For it would have struck in the heart of winter.

"It was a hard fight while it lasted," said Cappellini, "but I am glad to see that the men have agreed to abide by our decision, not only for their interest but for the order as well."

The *New York Times* editorially praised Mr. Lewis for his action in the Wilkes-Barre situation. "If the

unions expect justice they must do justice. The success of a strike is highly problematical when not backed by public opinion," the newspaper commented. "The alternative for industrial anarchy is industrial law. Nothing could more speedily provoke national legislation and a national court to interpret it than outlaw strikes in basic industries. If the unions obey their own laws and show a decent respect for the community of which they are a part, there will be no need of an industrial court.

"Woven into the whole confused situation are the influence of active Communist agents, the lack of discipline in a seventy percent foreign-born membership and operators more difficult than most for union men to deal with," said *The Times*.

Like a shepherd dog darting about his flock to keep the sheep headed for home, John L. Lewis worked furiously the next few weeks. In the Connellsville, Pennsylvania, region a wage reduction of twenty-five percent had been posted at the pit heads and several large groups of men quit work. Conferences were sought and an amicable agreement arranged.

Mr. Lewis asked again why Warren S. Stone, head of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, failed to pay union wages at the Coal River Collieries in West Virginia. He said the situation "is the outstanding scandal of the trade unions and the industrial world." He continued: "Coal River Collieries is a coal-producing company owned exclusively by members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Warren S. Stone, head of the Brotherhood, is chairman of the board of directors of Coal River Collieries and, as such, he is responsible for the labor policy of the company. Mr. Stone insists upon acceptance by the

miners of a rate of wages that would not only further impoverish those workers but would demoralize the entire coal industry. The United Mine Workers of America will not stand for any such thing. In a joint conference of miners and operators from the Central Competitive Field, an agreement was reached which extended the existing wage scales until April 1, 1927.

"Immediately, Coal River Collieries, whose mines are in the non-union territory of southern West Virginia and northeastern Kentucky, joined with the non-union coal companies in an assault upon the Jacksonville agreement. Up to that time Coal River Collieries had employed union miners and paid the union scale in the West Virginia mines, but had operated its Kentucky mine open shop. The latter mine is still being operated non-union.

"Mr. Stone, like other non-union operators, demanded that his employees take a reduction in wages. The United Mine Workers of America refused. Mr. Stone closed down the West Virginia mines rather than pay the union scale. He threw hundreds of men out of work, knowing that unemployment meant starvation for their families. Next, Coal River Collieries imported strikebreakers from the non-union fields of Virginia, Kentucky and Alabama to take the places of the union men.

"Then the union men were evicted from their homes. Their families and belongings were thrown out upon the roads or hillsides in the dead of winter, with no place to go. One hundred and three families were thus evicted last month, when the weather in West Virginia mountains was bitter cold. The company refuses to permit these union miners to work in its mines unless they accept the reduced scale of wages. As a result of these evictions the

United Mine Workers of America has been compelled to spend scores of thousands of dollars in building houses and barracks for these unfortunate families and in supporting them with food, clothing, fuel, medical attention and the other necessities.

"This union has paid the undertakers' bills for burying the children of these men that have died since this thing happened.

"The United Mine Workers of America has made not only repeated but continuous efforts to adjust this matter with Mr. Stone and his company, but it has met with the same identical refusal and opposition that it has many times experienced with the cold-blooded, hard-boiled non-union companies. There is no merit in Mr. Stone's contention that Coal River Collieries cannot pay the union scale. Other coal companies pay the union scale, many of them less fortunately situated than Coal River Collieries. Effective, businesslike management and operation will enable any coal company easily to pay union wages and make money.

"It is extraordinary, indeed, that Mr. Stone, professing to be a trade-unionist, casts aside the fundamental principles of trade-unionism by refusing to negotiate a contract with the miners' union. He has discarded the principles of collective bargaining, upon which the entire structure of trade-unionism rests, and has adopted the methods that have made non-union coal fields a menace to organized labor for many years."

At about the same time it was announced that unless the existing wage scale in effect in the mines in Northern West Virginia was reduced it was expected that every pit operating there would be shut down on April 1st. The Consoli-

dation Coal Company, one of the largest concerns of its kind in the world, with mines in West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, had already suspended operations in twenty-two mines in the Kingwood, West Virginia field. There were indications that its other six mines in the area would close down at the same time.

This issue was to be joined again, this time on the floor of an A. F. of L. convention, where Mr. Lewis would be seen emerging victoriously.

Having demanded that the miners in District Number One abide by their contracts with the companies, Mr. Lewis was just as firm in turning down the coal operators of the Western Pennsylvania and Ohio districts when they sought conferences early in April with a view to revising the existing wage scale downwards. The Pittsburgh Coal Producers' Association made public all letters exchanged between the operators and the union chief in which the employers asked for a conference to discuss a revision of the wage scale.

"A year's trial of the present wage scale has shown that our fields cannot compete in our market against non-union coal," the operators said. Mr. Lewis was quoted as saying in his reply that the miners' organization would be glad to cooperate in any practical plan, "which does not contemplate a modification of existing wage contracts."

This drew the wrath of the Scale Committee of operators in both hard and soft coal fields, who were meeting at Cleveland, Ohio.

"Mr. Lewis' outright refusal to consider any proposal that contemplates a modification of existing wage contracts means that the operators in union fields will be driven out of business," their statement said.

Mr. Lewis made no comment.

He was too busy at the moment. But he prepared his answer carefully, for he realized that there would be more demands for a revision of the Jacksonville settlement. On the other hand he knew he could not give in for his men were near revolt even at the existing scales. There was increasing unemployment and chiseling on the terms of the contract. Wage cuts were commonplace. On April 1st the men in eighteen bituminous mines in Northern West Virginia struck. William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, addressed a mass meeting of 4,500 of the strikers at Morgantown, West Virginia, where the miners' leaders announced a campaign "to organize every coal mine in West Virginia." They added that John L. Lewis would visit the fields within the next few weeks to make a series of addresses.

The Berwind-White Coal Co., one of the largest operators of mines in the Somerset-Cambria section of the Central Pennsylvania field, was next to cut wages. The order was for a twenty percent slash, affecting about 4,000 men. The cut was temporarily accepted when the company announced that under the new scale it hoped to keep more men regularly employed.

Mr. Lewis was now ready to answer the operators and explain why he refused to consider lower wages. From the headquarters of the International Union at Indianapolis came the statement:

"In the first place there is a valid, binding contract in effect between the United Mine Workers of America and the coal companies that employ union labor. We hold that a contract once entered into must be carried out.

"Second, miners' wages are none too high. The basic

wage rate is \$7.50 a day. If a miner were employed steadily every work-day in the year at that rate he could not earn \$200 a month. Most of them are employed half time or less.

"Third, a reduction in wages in the union coal fields would not solve the problem of a stagnant coal industry. It would not increase the demand for coal or sell an additional ton.

"There is a normal demand in the American market for approximately 500,000,000 tons of bituminous coal, and that is all the market can possibly absorb. But reduced wages would curtail the miner's earning power and give him less money to spend with the merchants and to maintain his family.

"Fourth, a reduction in wages would not benefit the coal operators in the union fields, because such a reduction would immediately be followed by a further reduction by operators in non-union fields and the situation would then be the same as it was before any reduction was made. Non-union operators can cut wages below the union operators any time they wish to do so, because their employees are unorganized and helpless to protect themselves.

"The United Mine Workers of America do not propose that the wages of union miners shall be dragged down to the level of those of the non-union fields, where starvation pay is the common practice."

Sporadic strikes were frequent now in the Central Pennsylvania fields as well as in West Virginia and there were disorders at mines adjacent to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, as some of the union companies resumed digging with non-union miners. In some towns strikers and their wives threw up barricades to keep out the non-union workers.

The chaotic condition of the coal industry came up for discussion in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 29th at a joint meeting of the Central Pennsylvania Coal Producers' Association and the Association of Bituminous Operators. No representatives of the miners were present. B. W. Clark of Indiana, who presided, said the operators were convinced the depression in Central Pennsylvania could not be overcome and prosperous conditions restored in the mining industry until the Jacksonville agreement had been modified. "Non-unionized fields and about one-half of the other fields in the district," he said, "have reduced wages twenty to twenty-five percent. Over seventy percent of the coal produced in Central Pennsylvania comes from non-union mines. When the Jacksonville agreement was signed practically ninety-five percent of the coal was mined at that wage rate and a proper reduction in wages would restore competitive levels between union and non-union fields."

The press, too, was pounding at Mr. Lewis, but he was so busy shuttling back and forth from Indianapolis to Washington, and making occasional inspection trips into the troubled Pennsylvania and West Virginia coal areas that he hardly noticed. A typical assault was made by *The Independent*, under the title, "King Coal's Boss."

Calling him "a labor leader without imagination," it said:

"By far the most exaggeratedly typical boss of labor's largest and most powerful Tammany Hall is President John Llewellyn Lewis of the United Mine Workers of America. Lewis is many things on many different occasions, but he is always 'regular,' with himself as the chief arbiter of regularity. He is the grand walking delegate,

the glorified organizer, the perfect boss in American labor.

"He has physical courage but no creative daring. His morale is a matter of magnificent brow-beating rather than political subtlety. He moves slowly, with a wealth of objective detail, shrewdly enough, but—above all—calmly.

"He rose, not through brilliance, but because he combines with his slugging intelligence an enormous capacity for concentrated work, a tough and merciless will and a clean life. But he is bossing and not leading because—though his feet are on solid ground—his magnificent head rests on an iron frame only six feet above it. The main reason Lewis has been able to build up one of the most powerful personal machines in American labor is because he gives the impression of being an excellent strike winner. He won the two great national strikes of 1919 and 1922. It is true that in both instances he made the issues of a nature in which the union was almost certain of a technical victory; while in fact, the union lost in both strikes in real wages and even in some working conditions. Though his grip is powerful, it ever more resembles a clutch."

Which was setting a new high for wordage needed to say "He ain't as progressive as me."

Chapter Twelve

CIVIL WAR IN WEST VIRGINIA

April-July, 1925

IT SEEMS LIKE AN ABSURDITY, but sometimes it happened that the same persons who took occasional potshots at union miners in West Virginia when they were abroad one at a time later served the survivors court summons when the diggers gathered in small groups. There was a great legal to-do concerning whether miners could peacefully persuade non-union men to join their organization. The operators tried to prosecute the organizers, basing their action on an old injunction granted in 1913. The United Mine Workers carried the case to the Federal District Court and on May 8th Federal Judge W. W. Baker ruled that peaceful persuasion was not in violation of the old injunction.

Judge Baker also notified attorneys for the West Virginia-Pittsburgh Coal Company, which had brought the action against seventeen inland union officers, and which had obtained the earlier injunction, that he would not grant further injunctions until he heard arguments on the merits of the specific case. The miners hailed that decision as a great victory. But on the following day Federal Judge R. G. Baltzell at Indianapolis and Judge Warren B. Knittle in the Circuit Court at Phillipi, West Virginia,

granted temporary restraining orders against union officials, preventing them from interfering with cooperative mining projects in Indiana and from picketing in West Virginia.

In session in Atlantic City on May 11th, the National Retail Coal Merchants Association went on record as opposing any project for governmental control of coal production. The convention expressed belief that the industry could be lifted from the present chaotic conditions only by the united efforts of the coal men. While the public was advised to lay in winter stocks as early as possible no general price rise was anticipated, officials said, and profiteers were denounced.

The perpetual shadow of another bitter strike in the anthracite fields played about the conference room the next day as Walter Gordon Merritt, the counsel for the operators, said that at the coming wage scale meetings, set for August 16th, the producers "must be plaintiffs and not defendants," and that the labor issue "was all one sided anyway." Now the miners could stand twice as much from almost any one else. It was a well-known fact that if Walter Gordon Merritt even stood up to breathe a cheery "good morning" to the mine workers it was like waving a matzoh at Herr Hitler. The vehemence of delivery shown by the New York lawyer-publicist who hurled each word like Walter Johnson used to pitch, caused impartial observers to see no other possibility but a strike in store after August 30th, when the agreement expired. Mr. Merritt's remarks left a bitter feeling when the miners read them in newspapers as the meeting closed.

Meanwhile the miner's legal victory in West Virginia was short-lived for on May 19th Judge Baker virtually

reversed himself and issued a temporary order restraining the diggers on many points, among them the use of "peaceful persuasion" methods of organization work in the Panhandle district. The court fixed June 1st as the date for a final hearing.

Aroused by what he felt was an injustice and an attack on the personal liberty of the miners, former Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes on May 21st volunteered his services to fight the temporary injunction granted by Federal Judge Baker against "peaceful persuasion." Mr. Hughes, according to other counsel of the United Mine Workers, concurred in the view that the restraining order was "enslavement of the human mind."

The constant scurrying to the courts by coal operators, injunctions of one kind or another, and the refusal of mine workers and their wives to obey the restraining orders of the courts finally resulted in an unprecedented situation in the mine regions of Northern West Virginia. United Mine Workers officials said that more than 300 persons had been thrown into jail on charges of having disobeyed the injunctions obtained by non-union operators in that region. These employers were jubilant and boastful that they would drive the union organizers out of the region in a few weeks with the aid of the courts.

The Operator's Wage Scale Committee agreed to meet with the union leaders on August 16th. But rumors circulated that Walter Gordon Merritt was to be selected as chairman of the negotiating committee to succeed Samuel D. Warriner, since the Philadelphian was getting rather tired of conferences with miners. He had spent years at it and those years had taken other years off his life span, his wife felt. But Mr. Merritt would never suit the miners.

Ellis Searles, editor of the *United Mine Workers' Journal* and John L. Lewis' "right hand bower" made that fact very plain indeed when he spoke at a luncheon in New York City. He said there was no man in America who hated labor unions with such ferocity and who devoted such hard-working fidelity to the task of conscientious distaste.

"When we ask 'What's the matter with coal?' we do not have to look far for, at least, some of the trouble," said Mr. Searles. "Who is this Walter Gordon Merritt? He has been for years counsel for the National Anti-Boycott Association, traditional enemies of organized labor. He said at his Atlantic City speech 'I have never been able to understand why the public should hesitate to condemn the attitude of labor as it affects the anthracite industry.' That is what he said, and it makes its own point."

Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover warned the public on May 21st that coal should be bought at once. He pointed out that the bituminous coal industry was the weakest spot in the industrial situation and that later on the railroads "may lack facilities sufficient to handle a rush of orders."

With many mines closing, Mr. Hoover pointed out, thousands of miners were forced into other occupations, notably farming and road construction. Not only would the consumer profit by low prices and quick delivery by immediate buying, the Secretary said, but it would help to stabilize the industry and promote national prosperity. Since it was Mr. Hoover's belief that the operators were forced to sell their output at a loss at the time, he also was of the opinion that consumers should have little complaint about the prices.

The entire country was again becoming interested in the mine situation, and there was an appreciable increase of newspaper space devoted to John L. Lewis. The press was still divided concerning his merits. Some stories lauded him to the skies. Others were printed in which his ability was minimized. As, for instance, the one on June 21st entitled "Middle Age Now Rules in the Trade Unions." The reporter discussed various union leaders and of Mr. Lewis he said:

"In coal mining, which has suffered serious depression recently, are a variety of trade union officials, of whom John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers is the chief. Lewis, though only forty-five years old, represents the older type of labor executive, autocratic, more aggressive than penetrating, unreceptive to the newer principle, a protagonist of simple unionism. His union, with more than 500,000 members, has various wings, and Lewis has more than once been called upon to suppress or conciliate rebellions within its ranks. He dismissed from the union last year 12,000 Pennsylvania miners who struck 'illegally.'

"John Brophy, president of District Number Two in the bituminous field; Chris Golden, president of District Number Nine in the anthracite area, and Thomas Kennedy, now national Secretary of the union, are considered more promising types than Lewis."

An editorial of the period captioned "Labor Union Strategy," draws a sharp distinction between the attitudes of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the United Mine Workers of America, in discussing the first year's operation of the impartial machinery set up in the New York men's clothing industry by agreement between the

New York Clothing Manufacturers Exchange and Mr. Hillman's union.

"The record," the editorial said, "makes an impressive commentary on the benefits of industrial collaboration which is now set in strong perspective by the crude exhibition of industrial conflict being staged by the anthracite coal operators and the United Mine Workers Union.

"The whole industrial strategy of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers under President Sidney Hillman stands in sharp contrast to that of the United Mine Workers under the leadership of John L. Lewis. The Amalgamated boldly assumes that its members have a stake in the conduct of the industry beyond mere bickering and quarreling over the wage scale and working conditions. The United Mine Workers ask for higher scales, but make no effort to join with the employers in a joint responsible undertaking to reduce production costs so that its wages may be increased without raising the price of coal. They bluster and threaten and stay outside the circle of broader industrial planning and technique. . . ."

Had Mr. Lewis answered that editorial he might have told the story of Mrs. O'Shaughnessy and her children, whom she was always berating because they could not swim. One of her neighbors asked her why she did not let them go to the pool and try, anyway. Whereupon Mrs. O'Shaughnessy drew herself up in great dignity and is said to have remarked:

"I'll niver let them go near the water until they learn to swim!"

Mr. Lewis had proved time and time again that he knew what was wrong with the coal industry and was moving towards the remedy. Secretary of Labor James J.

Davis, too, hinted that the government should take over the mines in an address at Pennsylvania Military College, Philadelphia.

"The entire country is suffering from an overdevelopment of the coal industry," he said. "All the coal in the country is provided by men who work no more than two and a half days a week. This makes their purchasing power low and does not argue well for prosperity."

"Someone must step into coal business and stabilize it. I would recommend that these men work 300 days each year and operate fewer mines rather than work but two days a week and operate all the mines."

To which, of course, the miners would have shouted "Amen" and gone right out to assure the union that all of the miners hired under the reduced setup would be union men. But since the Secretary was only "recommending" and since politicians get approximately as much credit for recommendations as they do for action in this country, it was much easier to stop right there. The secretary probably could have recommended many nice things. The miners had nothing to do but continue along the same old lines, hoping that by enforcing high wages on the industry the marginal works would be eliminated by natural process. They called a meeting of the 155,000 anthracite miners of Pennsylvania at Scranton, on June 29th, to formulate demands for a new wage contract they hoped to have in effect after the old one expired August 31st.

In his keynote speech on the opening day, Mr. Lewis charged that some of the large railroad systems and bituminous coal companies were engaged in a conspiracy to destroy the United Mine Workers of America. He sounded the threat of a country-wide strike of the soft coal

miners if repudiation of the Jacksonville agreement continued. He said that several large rail systems, including the Pennsylvania Railroad, had withdrawn from the open bituminous market and at increased expense had begun buying coal in non-union territory.

He included in the charge that many of the nation's most responsible leaders, including one cabinet member, were profiting or about to profit through their company's repudiation of the Jacksonville agreement, which was signed in all good faith by the workers' representatives. He sang out that the Pittsburgh Coal Company, of which Andrew W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, was the most influential stockholder, was one of the first to turn away from an honorable contract. He also named the Consolidation Coal Company, of which John D. Rockefeller Jr., was a large stockholder, and the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, of which Charles M. Schwab was a principal factor.

"If this situation continues it may be necessary to order a nation-wide shutdown of all the bituminous mines in the country while the government, the mine operators and representatives of the mine workers discuss whether the Jacksonville agreement is going to be carried out," Mr. Lewis said.

Aroused by their leader's conspiracy charge the convention empowered the Executive Presidents of the three districts to levy a special assessment of \$200,000.00 to be used in aiding bituminous miners. Federal agents obtained copies of the speech and forwarded them to Secretary of Labor Davis as Mr. Lewis continued in a comprehensive review of both the bituminous and anthracite coal situations. The miners would vigorously resist any efforts at

wage reductions, and insist on full recognition of the union and the "checkoff" system in payment of union dues, he said. He accused the anthracite operators of raising a fund of \$500,000.00 for a publicity campaign "to create the impression that high retail prices for anthracite coal are the result of high wages."

Attacking published reports that 10,000,000 tons of anthracite coal were in storage and available for a two-month supply if a suspension of operations should occur, Mr. Lewis asserted that only ten percent of that amount represented domestic size, available for furnaces and stoves. The remainder was smaller sizes and slack, which compete with the bituminous products, he reported. The Scales Committee filed a report that the union representatives would demand a ten percent wage increase for contract miners and one dollar a day for laborers. The leaders estimated there were 50,000 contract men who earned eight dollars a day when they worked, wages being fixed on a car basis. Day laborers received a minimum of \$4.62 a day. The demands would be made for all the miners in the hard coal area, it was announced from the rostrum. The Committee also planned to ask that the operators pay for pneumatic drills and compressed air used in mining coal, an item which in the past had been charged to the contract miners.

On July 2nd the miners' convention formally adopted the demands their leaders had outlined and favored the adoption of a two-year contract. At the same time it was freely admitted that a suspension was looked for on September 1st and that the union was preparing for it.

Promptly on July 9th, the anthracite operators met at Atlantic City and rejected the miners' demands. Samuel

D. Warriner, acting as spokesman for the operators, said that the wage increases, together with the other demands, would cost \$100,000,000.00 a year. He told the miners' representatives that with increased competition and diminishing sales, retail coal prices must be lowered if full-time employment was to be continued.

He made no specific suggestion as to wages but said that he hoped joint efforts to increase production would be successful and wage costs would not have to be cut. To avoid a possible strike or suspension on September 1st, when the agreement terminated, he suggested arbitration of the points then in dispute.

Mr. Lewis, who had presented the miners' demands in person, rejected the idea of arbitration, saying the miners would not permit a third agency to determine the conditions under which they were to live, the food they would eat and the degree of education they could give their children. In placing the demands before the operators Mr. Lewis pointed out that since the last joint conference two years before more than 1,000 miners had been killed in the collieries and more than 40,000 maimed. The wage increase sought, he said, was a fair price for the service which demanded such sacrifice.

While the Atlantic City conferences were on, John Hays Hammond, chairman of the United States Coal Committee, at his summer home at Swampscott, Massachusetts, said the "selfish purposes of the miners and operators" would prevent an anthracite strike of any great duration. He expressed confidence that the workers appreciated quite as well as the operators that if there was an extended strike, the markets for hard coal would be lost and their employment lessened.

Mr. Hammond said that President Coolidge was ready to act if a strike was declared, but that, "He has no authority in law to act in an effective way."

At the same time the Commission Chairman warned the public to buy its winter supply of coal at once. The only real danger Mr. Hammond professed to see in the miners making strong demands and the operators making counter demands was the opportunity given to middlemen and speculators to gouge the public. "The public should not be led into paying speculative prices," he said.

Wearied by the bickering with the anthracite operators at the Atlantic City session, Mr. Lewis suddenly left for Philadelphia and Indianapolis on the eve of the resumption of negotiations on July 14th. In the absence of the labor chief it was generally assumed that an impasse would be reached and that no progress would be made until just before the existing pact expired.

Resenting newspaper criticism, which blamed both operators and miners for "the leisurely coal war," the Anthracite Negotiating Committee decided to speed up work and to hold sessions twice a day.

Mr. Warriner said the operators resented the criticism as far as they were concerned and pointed to the fact that he had previously urged arbitration. He also scored Mr. Lewis for "going to Indianapolis on more important business." The union vice-president, he said, "although here, absents himself while the leaders of the industry are here and in attendance at the meeting."

Philip Murray, speaking for the miners, denied that they planned to seek an adjournment because a convention of District Number One miners was to be held at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on July 20th. Furthermore, he said,

the only recess taken had been at the instance of the operators. The operators, according to Chris J. Golden, president of District Number Nine, "are the only ones who have something to gain by a suspension. With perhaps 10,000,000 tons on hand and a panic on the part of the public they will be able to enrich themselves to the extent of a million or two million dollars because of a demand for their stocks."

At this point in the negotiations, Vice-President Murray clashed with the railroads by proposing that wage increases for anthracite miners could be paid out of freight reductions on hard coal. This suggestion drew the criticism of Robert S. Binkerd, vice-chairman of the Committee on Public Relations of the Eastern Railroads. To the reprimand Mr. Murray wired that investigation had convinced the miners "substantial cuts can be effected in freight rates of anthracite coal-carrying railroads without reducing wages of railroad employees." The telegram contained official figures of the Department of Labor showing the sharp upward increases in freight rates for anthracite coal in recent years. It added:

"Mine workers contend that high freight rates such as these are wholly unjustifiable and represent a substantial factor in the cost of anthracite coal to the ultimate consumer."

Mr. Murray also held an important conference on the bituminous situation with representatives of the soft coal miners of Northern West Virginia, including Van H. Bittner, in charge of Northern West Virginia, Thomas C. Townsend, former Attorney General of West Virginia, now chief counsel to the mine workers there, and Tony Teti, a union organizer.

Mr. Bittner reported that more than 5,000 lawsuits had been filed against the miners in seventeen months. There had been as many as 2,000 arrests in a single day, some pickets being arrested two or three times within twenty-four hours. Despite the state law against the hiring of deputy sheriffs as private guards the companies had managed to do it, the report said.

State courts had issued the most drastic injunctions ever granted against a United Mine Workers of America organization movement. Constables and Justices of the Peace had been arrested in their official duties when in some instances it was charged they aided miners to carry on their activities. More than 12,000 men were on strike in the West Virginia fields of the Northern section, since many large companies had refused to carry out the terms of the Jacksonville agreement.

The report laid particular emphasis to apparently haphazard arrests, charging that wives and daughters of miners, more than 1,000 women in all, had been locked up. The families of 1,200 miners were living in barracks, having been evicted from their homes by employer-landlords. It was a dismal picture, not the sort to inspire peaceful negotiations. But the conferences went on until the biennial convention of the Union's District Number One got under way at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on July 20th when Cappellini left the Atlantic City conference with the operators to preside.

There was violence almost as soon as the delegates convened. Fist fights were commonplace and the police were sent for. During one of the *mêlées*, George Isaacs of Wilkes-Barre, defeated anti-administration candidate for district vice-president, was knocked to the floor and badly

beaten. While he was being manhandled a general tussle was in progress all over the hall. Later in the day Isaacs, patched up, returned to the convention and tried to make a speech but was ruled out of order. Before the convention was adjourned reports from Atlantic City that the district's delegates were willing to cede all of their wage increase demands rather than strike were denounced heartily. The miners would not concede one penny.

The Atlantic City conference, in session since July 9th, had made no progress and Mr. Lewis was in Indianapolis on other business. President Coolidge was being urged to act, civic organizations and other groups appealing to him to seek authority under a special act of Congress. They urged legislation to regulate the continuous mining of coal, with governmental operation of mines as a last resort.

The operators were still saying they would insist on arbitration while union leaders were just as emphatic in opposing it.

Mr. Bittner sent telegrams to Secretary of Commerce Hoover and Secretary of Labor Davis denouncing the Bethlehem Mines Corporation, a subsidiary of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, and the Consolidation Coal Company, for alleged violation of the Jacksonville agreement and warning that the miners did not propose to have their wage agreements broken down "by this method of guerilla warfare."

Unless something was speedily done, he said, it would be necessary for West Virginia miners to ask the United Mine Workers of America for a general strike. Telegrams were sent to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Samuel Untermyer, appealing for their help against eviction of miners' families and assaults by armed guards. Mr. Rockefeller

owned an interest in the Consolidation Coal and Mr. Untermeyer was a large stockholder in Bethlehem Steel.

An optimistic note was injected into the situation by President Coolidge when a spokesman at the Summer White House at Swampscott indicated that the Chief Executive felt there was no danger of a strike, his opinion being based on reports presented by Secretary Davis and Federal observers at the Atlantic City meetings.

The spokesman said the pressure exerted by the Administration on the disputants would be sufficient to compel a settlement and prevent a strike. Mr. Coolidge was said to have plans which his advisers believed would even end a strike within a short time. However, it was said that the President had no intention of calling a special session of Congress to deal with the coal situation.

W. W. Inglis, president of the Glen Alden Coal Company, made a proposal that the contending parties cooperate in continuation of operations after September 1st, and place the dispute in the hands of three persons approved by both sides or a commission appointed by President Coolidge. The miners took the position that the time was not propitious to sign such a pledge and that the suggestion was merely window dressing to enable the operators to issue a statement that they had done their best to protect the public from a fuel shortage. When the union definitely refused, the employers began to feel some concern over the situation.

The American crisis was given a more serious meaning when it was announced in London by executives of the British Miners' Federation that 1,200,000 workers would strike on July 31st unless the operators retracted terms of employment which they had announced for August 1st.

Late in July it was apparent that wage conversations would go on until President Coolidge and Governor Pinchot had less than a week to avert the suspension of digging, should the conferees end deadlocked. The checkoff seemed to be one of the insurmountable obstacles, since the anthracite miners pointed out it had been granted in the bituminous fields for a long time with satisfactory results. But the operators questioned the legality of the practice. The miners claimed the system would obviate many small strikes.

President Coolidge made it plain in his newspaper conferences that he did not intend to step into the situation until the disputants became hopelessly deadlocked. He took the position that if the government stepped in before that it would do more harm than good. But for the fourth time since 1920 only official intervention, it seemed, could bring about the signing of a new contract. Such intervention, it was predicted, would come from one of three quarters: President Coolidge, Governor Pinchot or United States Senator George Wharton Pepper. Partisan politics in Pennsylvania, it was said, would largely determine the date and by whose hand the intervention occurred.

Two years previously Governor Pinchot had summoned the miners and operators to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and had ended the deadlock by giving the miners a ten percent increase, which raised the cost of coal at the mines a dollar or more a ton. By this he added to his political prestige among the hard coal miners in his state. In midsummer of 1925 Pinchot was regarded as anxious to succeed Mr. Pepper in the Senate. On the other hand, Senator Pepper, too, stood well with the miners as a result of having ultimately brought the operators and workers together in

1922 after a six-month strike and after President Harding and Secretary of the Interior Fall had taken a hand in the situation. Mr. Pepper was looked upon as a candidate to succeed himself and it was believed that he might seek the support of President Coolidge.

Immediately following reports from Atlantic City that the anthracite dispute would eventually be settled by partisan Pennsylvania politics, President Coolidge let it be known that he did not intend to become involved in the political by-play on the question. A spokesman said the President was convinced that the dispute between the operators and the miners should be settled by their own methods. The Administration, it was said, hoped that logic would settle the dispute and prevent a complete shut-down of mining operations. But if there was no adjustment by the parties involved Mr. Coolidge intended to exercise his influence in a way agreed upon when Secretary Davis conferred with him on the imminence of a hard coal strike. The government's plan had already been worked out by Secretaries Davis and Hoover, and naturally did not include any radical step. Mr. Coolidge intended to rely upon public opinion to force the operators and miners to get together and furnish an adequate amount of coal. He realized that he had no more power than three years before, and that he could not seize the mines or compel the miners to work under Constitutional prohibitions. But if aroused public opinion should not have the desired effect, he planned to call Congress into session six weeks in advance of the regular session and urge enactment of legislation as recommended by the Coal Commission. John Hays Hammond, chairman of the Coal Commission, announced that the country was better prepared

for a hard coal strike than it had been and said the surplus of anthracite was greater than it was three years before and the people were more used to fuel substitutes.

“And if the occasion should arise whereby President Coolidge feels it necessary to exert his influence,” said Mr. Hammond, “he could arouse public support as few Presidents have ever been able to do.”

Chapter Thirteen

KEEPING COOL WITH COOLIDGE

July–October, 1925

WHILE THE PENDULUM SWUNG from necessity to greed at the Atlantic City conferences, history's phonograph needle stuck and started repeating the record. The men who pierced the world's crust for coal were creating another globe-wide problem. From Berlin the cables told of the "distressed Barons of the Rhur" who asked the Luther Cabinet to loot the country's treasury, force the railroads to grant low rates and increase the miners' hours without raising their salaries to save the capitalists from serious loss on 10,000,000 tons of coal piled at the pit heads. The government took the action, but faced violent social struggles within the Reich and a protest from other European countries because German coal could be delivered at the low rail rates at ten percent under world prices.

In England all sorts of make-shift plans were being put into action, one of them providing that a man's wages should be regulated by the size of his family, opening up a unique way for a man to raise his salary. It was pointed out that this system was already in force in 10,000 concerns employing 1,000,000 workers in France and in mines employing 280,000 men in Belgium. Britain's government gave proof that it was ready to take decisive steps concern-

ing a threatened walkout of 1,000,000 men over the new working conditions posted by the operators.

"This new turn of affairs" cabled an observer from London, "seems to have had an effect already, for it is unofficially stated that the mine owners now will consent to withdraw their notices of the termination of the existing agreement and their new wage proposals." The demand for such a withdrawal as voiced by the newspapers and many men in public life, had become so insistent that the mine owners would likely be in bad odor if they continued to refuse.

W. C. Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, was already acting as intermediary but the cabinet went ahead with a meeting to draft a plan to meet the situation. The miners were receiving continuous evidences of sympathy, including pledges of support from the Independent Labor Party and the Society of Friends. J. H. Thomas, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, announced that the railway workers executives had unanimously decided not to handle coal from the first hour of stoppage, which meant, in his opinion, absolute paralysis of British industry.

King George was keeping in active touch with the situation and the announcement was made that his Majesty would "hold himself in readiness to give any assistance within his power, should it be required." After four days of continuous separate conferences between the Premier and the operators and miners, who were too embittered to meet in joint sessions, the government issued a statement indicating that the warring forces might agree. At a meeting of the cabinet, Premier Baldwin announced that the miners were desirous of cooperating "in the inquiry

proposed by the Prime Minister with a view to a full investigation of methods of improving the productive efficiency of the industry for the purpose of increasing its competitive power in world markets."

As the miners were unwilling to accept a wage reduction in advance of the inquiry the Prime Minister said that "under the circumstances the Government was prepared to render assistance to the industry until spring, by which time the inquiry would be completed." On August 1st, since the operators had withdrawn their order for revised working conditions, the strike order was cancelled and general relief was expressed that "a catastrophe was averted," although David Lloyd George bitterly denounced the settlement of the dispute by payment of a \$50,000,000.00 subsidy which Parliament was asked to provide.

On August 20, 1925, the subsidy was voted and the miners accepted the truce, although officials of the union predicted a crisis the following May. Thus the British and German governments, by prompt action and a willingness to intercede, had saved their countries from bitter strikes. It was decisiveness in sharp contrast to the course adopted in the United States where the government was participating in the negotiations only by the presence of observers.

The Atlantic City conferees spent an entire day, for example, in argument over an advertising campaign by the operators, who paid for huge newspaper displays to point out that there should be no suspension of coal digging on September 1st since both sides could submit to arbitration. The miners replied that if the money spent in advertising had been employed in increasing wages there would be

peace in the industry instead of armed guards at still greater expense. To this point the operators replied that the advertising costs were infinitesimal, amounting to "only a few mills for each ton of coal." Although the operators continued to criticize John L. Lewis for not attending the conferences, neither Samuel D. Warriner nor W. J. Richards, president of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal Company, the two leaders of the employers, were present at the long-drawn-out negotiations at this time. The operators said that neither of the men would come back to the argument, since they had both promised "their families to stop, and anyway they needed a rest from the arduous parley."

A bitter undercurrent of feeling was developing among the operators, who had consistently asked for arbitration, against the possible selection of Governor Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania as a mediator. The miners, however, had every reason to favor Mr. Pinchot, who had not only aided them in the past but made no secret of the fact that he favored Federal regulation of the entire industry. While the miners did not demand that Mr. Warriner and Mr. Richards return to the conferences, there was a prediction that should they take that action, the operators would refuse, and the conferences would end on another sour note. The union leaders accused the operators of dilatory tactics, said they were tired of delay, and the operators gave every indication that none of the demands would be met, that an award of an arbitrator would be the only solution to the problem.

John L. Lewis returned to Atlantic City on July 31st and sent a letter to Mr. Warriner in which he characterized the operators' representatives as "supernumeraries"

and asked that the spokesman for the owners return to the conference.

"If it should then develop that the lesser executives have from time to time correctly set forth the position of the anthracite operators, it would the more quickly enable the mine workers' representatives to effectuate a discontinuance of the farce," the letter said.

Mr. Warriner had gone to his home at Lansford, Pennsylvania, and when the letter was read to him over the telephone he said he would reply when he received it. "In the meantime," he said, "I want to say that the committee representing the operators is fully authorized to negotiate a new agreement. I can scarcely believe that Mr. Lewis will take the responsibility, as he threatens, of breaking off the negotiations on the pretext that the operators' committee is lacking in power.

"Mr. Lewis," continued Mr. Warriner, "is lacking in power. He would object very properly to any attempt on our part to say who should represent the miners."

On August 4th Mr. Warriner flatly refused to rejoin the conference with the miners, and urged arbitration. A statement by Mr. Inglis blamed the miners for the delay in reaching a settlement, and also suggested "mediation by someone impartial." Mr. Lewis refused to negotiate any further with the operators' committee, as constituted, and the representatives of both interests went home, subject to call. The Executive Committee of the United Mine Workers immediately gave a sub-committee headed by Mr. Lewis full power to call a strike. The union president sent a second letter to Mr. Warriner, and received a conciliatory reply, but negotiations were not resumed. Mr. Coolidge again "let it be known on high authority" that he

would not intercede until a strike was actually called. Affairs dragged on.

Mr. Lewis wrote another letter to Mr. Warriner saying that only abandonment of the operators' opposition to wage increases and the checkoff system would bring the miners into conference again. In well-chosen words, ironically polite, the miners' chief rejected Mr. Warriner's suggestion of arbitration. When challenged by Mr. Warriner to justify his earlier statement that he opposed arbitration because of the "anthracite operators' well-known policy of keeping close to an arbitrator," Mr. Lewis said he referred "to the arbitration proceeding of some years ago when the final decision of the arbitrator was changed between twilight and dawn."

In a radio address broadcast from Atlantic City the belligerent labor leader said:

"Are we to arbitrate the question whether a miner shall be permitted to earn a decent American living for himself and his family?"

"Are we to arbitrate the earning capacity of the miner? Are we to arbitrate the amount he may spend for food, clothing, shelter, for the education of his children and his status as a citizen?" he continued.

"Such questions are not subject to arbitration and the United Mine Workers of America will never agree that such personal and family matters are to be determined by outsiders."

So huge were the profits made by mine operators, he said, that they could grant the demands of the miners without adding a penny to the price of coal and still enjoy profits to compare favorably with those yielded in other businesses. On the other hand, he said of 45,678 day men

among the miners, only 1,856 were able to earn more than \$2,000.00 a year and about 22,000 earned less than \$1,000.00 a year.

From Scranton, Pennsylvania, W. W. Inglis was quoted in the statement that accession to the demands of the strikers would make it necessary to add from \$2.00 to \$3.00 a ton to the price of hard coal. Secretary of Labor James J. Davis, who had gone to Europe, sent back word that he would return August 25th, less than a week before expiration of the agreement, which gave rise to the supposition that Governor Pinchot would become the logical third party to settle the situation.

Mr. Lewis took time out from the press of his duties to make the charge that part of the trouble between the miners and their employers could be traced to Moscow, Russia.

"Moscow," he told reporters, "has been in direct communication with the coal miners of this country, seeking to disrupt the union, endeavoring to stir up class war between the miners and the operators, and in general trying to spread the Communist doctrine of the Third Internationale."

He went on and on, quoting freely from a report which the United Mine Workers of America had drawn up some time previously. When he was asked for his opinion as to the justification for a warning against Communism which had just been given in a speech by Secretary of State Kellogg, Mr. Lewis said quickly:

"Secretary Kellogg was speaking strictly from the text. No man in this country, and no organization in this country knows more about Communist intrigue than Mr. Kellogg and the Department of State," he continued. "That

Department has its fingers on the pulse of radical activity in this country, perhaps even better than the Department of Justice, and it knows what money and what agents have come over here from Russia.

"The United Mine Workers once cooperated with the State Department in making an investigation of Communist propaganda and I believe that Secretary Kellogg was not exaggerating. Moscow has a most uncanny system of spreading its doctrines," Mr. Lewis continued. "The other morning every miner in Scranton woke up to find one of these circulars stuck under his door. Here, read one of them." And he handed the reporters a radical throw-away.

"You'll find it's pure Bolshevik propaganda aiming to upset the union," he said. "Must have been distributed in the night by someone within our ranks who had our membership list. We had another instance of Moscow's intrigue some time ago, when the coal miners up in Nova Scotia actually voted to join the Red Union."

Asked whether the affirmative vote cast was a majority vote, Mr. Lewis replied, "Yes, a majority vote of the union. When we found out about it we notified them that if they insisted upon belonging to the Red Union they could get out of the United Mine Workers, and so they backed away from Moscow and stuck with us."

Asked why the Nova Scotia miners were so susceptible to Red propaganda, Mr. Lewis said, "Because they are British and the British are much more receptive to Socialism. But probably an even more important reason was because they have been receiving miserly wages and living in hovels where rats would hardly live, so that they turned to any alternative, even to the boiler plate doctrine from

Moscow, in the hope that it would change their living conditions.

"Grind men under the employers' heel," continued Mr. Lewis emphatically, "and you invite Communism. Give men a square deal and you take out an insurance policy against it. That's one reason our American workers have not been susceptible so far. Our living conditions are fairly good. Keep them good and we'll have no radicalism in this country.

"Of course some coal operators would be glad to see the United Mine Workers broken up by such a sinister force as Communism. They believe they could fight off Communism single-handed. And it is undoubtedly true that if they are allowed to rule their districts like feudal barons, as some of them do now, they can ward off anything, even Christianity. One coal mine owner down in West Virginia openly boasts that he will let no man, not even a preacher on his property, unless he knows him and approves his business. One coal company has a fifteen-mile railroad up from the main line, and when you get on that train and the conductor comes through the car he not alone asks you for your ticket but he also asks you your business. If he is not satisfied with it, off the train you go.

"On the other hand, there are big, broad-minded operators who understand economics and social science and who realized that were the United Mine Workers to crumble, they would be replaced by something far more sinister and radical. Not that I contemplate any such crumbling," Mr. Lewis added with a grin.

He was asked whether British coal could be shipped to America at a cheap price in case of a strike. He replied, "The best answer to that question is that British labor and

mining methods are so antiquated that at the present time their coal costs about \$4.50 at the pit mouth, compared to our cost of \$2.25. The British manufacturer claims that his coal is so expensive that it boosts the price of his manufactured goods so high that he can't sell abroad. Which is a very serious thing when you remember that the British export eighty-five percent of their manufactured goods, while we export only fifteen percent.

"The big thing that Britain is up against is her semi-socialistic system of paying off labor. If I go down in an English pit, and I am rather ambitious and want to earn a little more than the other fellow, I turn out perhaps two tons more than my neighbor up in the next shaft. Then the next Monday the foreman calls me in and tells me that in the future my rate will be one shilling and a half per ton instead of two shilling per ton. That is because England operates under a minimum wage law, by which an employer is required to pay minimum wage and no more.

"Now say I have demonstrated my ability to earn more than this, and therefore I am paid at a lower rate so that I won't exceed the minimum. In other words my efficiency and energy are penalized. Never again do I speed up. I am satisfied with the minimum wage. That's why England produces less than one ton of coal per man per day, while an American miner produces four tons, plus, per day."

Mr. Lewis warned against recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States. Wherever the Russians go, he said, they go for propaganda. "It is a situation that challenges not only organized labor, but every employer as well."

He said that millions of dollars had been spent here to seize the American Federation of Labor, to suppress craft

unions by industrial unions or one big union, and by the conversion and mobilization of farmers and other related groups.

"This has been done by the Communist Party of America, the Workers' Party of America, the Trade Union Education League, and the Friends of Soviet Russia," he said. "They get their instructions from the President of the Communist Internationale. Our investigations prove that this move to capture control of the Federation of Labor has been under way several years and that three times the Bolshevik leaders have attempted armed insurrection and revolt in the United States. This was during the steel strike of 1919, in the 'outlaw' switchmens' strike of 1920 and in the railroad and coal strikes of 1922."

Speaking of the present threatening coal situation he said he felt sure a strike would come and that the workers would win the demands formulated at the June convention of the three anthracite districts.

In the last days before expiration of the agreement the Interstate Commerce Commission ordered a reduction in rail rates on West Virginia smokeless coal to New England and North Atlantic Seaboard points but denied a general reduction for hauling anthracite coal. This decision was attacked by William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, who charged that the order was for the benefit of the non-union fields.

In view of the repudiation of the Jacksonville pact by so many of the soft coal operators there were rumors that the strike, if called, would be a general one. Leaders of the international union held a secret conference in Philadelphia and reporters noted that heads of the bituminous miners were included.

Promptly on schedule, the formal strike order was

issued and on the morning of September 1, 1925, 150,000 miners stayed at their homes. Only a handful came to each mine to maintain order. Some of the others celebrated their holiday by taking trips around the country. They seemed to be in good humor, generally. John Hays Hammond immediately announced that the Federal Coal Commission's suggested legislation would be sought by President Coolidge, and the union leaders urged nationalization of the mines. Mr. Lewis said the recommendation was forced by Mr. Hammond's activities and that Mr. Hammond had put the controversy into politics.

In the next few days Governor Pinchot invited Mr. Inglis, representing the operators, and Mr. Lewis, for the miners to separate conferences. Both conferred but there was no announcement of tangible results.

The strike had been on only a few days when reports came from Philadelphia, New York and other cities that retail prices of hard coal had been increased because dealers said they had been compelled to buy independent coal at higher prices. Both Mr. Lewis and Ellis Searles, editor of the *Miners' Journal*, denounced the increase and branded it as profiteering. Mr. Lewis said the coal had been mined at the same cost as that sold the week before.

"'Independent coal,' so called because produced by companies other than the railroad group of operators, has not come into the market in great quantities," he said. "This is rank, ruthless profiteering."

The boost in hard coal prices was at sharp variance with earlier official predictions that plenty of hard coal and substitutes would be available if a strike should occur and the statements of the operators that large stocks of anthracite had been stored. It was quite a far cry from the op-

timistic statements emanating in August from the Summer White House that no early shortage was anticipated. Within a week of the strike call E. E. Loomis, president of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, insisting that he was not speaking for the operators, sent up a trial balloon in suggesting that the anthracite strike might be settled by a renewal of the old wage agreement for eighteen months or two years. But the union leaders turned a deaf ear to the suggestion.

Instead Mr. Lewis turned to an attack upon Mr. Hammond, saying he had "mixed a devil's stew for Congress to sup" in his recommendations. Mr. Hammond replied simply that the Federal Coal Committee was a fact-finding commission and had carried out its work.

On Labor Day the *New York Times* carried an editorial captioned "Enemies Within Labor's Household," in which it bitterly attacked the union leadership. It said in part:

"The leadership which has just now brought about the strike in the anthracite mines has not been of a sort to encourage those who favor collective bargaining in large industry, and who had hoped for wise management of the unions. Each nominal success which President Lewis has won for the United Mine Workers has been a real damage to thousands of his own followers, and has led to a marked actual diminution of the coal mined by union labor.

"This sort of blunder in tactics cannot be indefinitely repeated without bringing the whole march forward of organized labor to a halt."

The strike went into its second week without any disorder in the coal fields, the miners having decided to

refrain from picketing. Attacks on the Pittsburgh Coal Company, a Mellon corporation, the Consolidation Coal Company, the Bethlehem Mines Corporation, and other of the larger companies and defense of the checkoff were the main subjects of the addresses at the larger Labor Day celebrations.

Since the anthracite strike was very effective, Mr. Lewis turned his attention to the plight of the bituminous miners, particularly those in West Virginia where a number of the large union mines for some time had been charged with violating the Jacksonville wage agreement. He went on an inspection tour and within a few hours after his arrival in Fairmont, West Virginia, he and his associates were served with forty-one injunctions restraining them in effect from addressing the miners and in otherwise carrying out organization work in behalf of the union. Boldly disregarding these papers, Mr. Lewis told 30,000 miners and their families, gathered on a sunny hilltop overlooking the Monongahela River near Fairmont, on September 26th, that "the day will never come when the operators will be able to print enough injunctions to drive the miners' union out of West Virginia."

Fifty leading officials of the international union, including Vice-President Philip Murray, Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Kennedy and Van A. Bittner, in charge of operation for the union in Northern West Virginia, were present at the mass meeting. In introducing Mr. Lewis and the other union leaders, Mr. Bittner said injunctions were like "leaves of grass in the lives of Labor leaders." He told the audience that the union was fighting judges and not courts.

Following the advance in coal prices, charges were

made by Michael Tuch, president of the Brooklyn Union Coal Company, of Brooklyn, that no acute coal shortage existed, "but that there was a manufactured shortage which is being used to increase retail prices." He said speculators owned nearly 50,000 tons of hard coal which was afloat on barges in the vicinity of New York. Estimates of other tremendous stocks, as high as 2,000,000 tons said to be held at other points within twenty miles of New York, were made by other retail dealers and towing company officials. These statements bore out Mr. Lewis' forecast that synthetic shortages would be developed in the event of a strike so as to permit increased profit-taking.

New Jersey was also feeling the pressure of profiteering and President Coolidge, Mr. Lewis and the operators were bitterly criticized for the strike by Governor Silzer. Charging the Coolidge Administration with responsibility for the scarcity and high price of coal, he said:

"There is no reason why Federal action cannot be efficacious in curbing these monopolies in the anthracite industry and the exorbitant prices which they exact. The extreme patience of Americans is marvelous.

"By the failure of the Coolidge Administration to take definite action, it has left itself nearly helpless to deal with the present strike. The responsibility for the present situation is upon the Administration in Washington and upon the people of the United States who will not stir themselves to see that these conditions are corrected."

About mid-September a member of a large New York coal selling firm had sailed for Europe with the announcement that if the coal strike was not settled within two weeks coal would be bought from Wales. He said his firm alone would import 50,000 tons of anthracite a month. He

added that the United States had a four to six weeks supply of anthracite on hand and with plenty of steam coal and an abundance of bituminous fuel in the country there was no danger of a shortage.

The Miners' International Federation, meeting in Brussels, immediately replied that its officers had been in communication with the officials of the United Mine Workers Union and that action would be taken to prevent the exportation of Welsh anthracite coal to America for the purposes of breaking the strike. A. J. Cook, secretary of the British Miners' Federation, supplemented this statement by saying his organization had already taken steps to protect the American miners by blocking the exportation of Welsh coal to the United States.

With the consent of their leader, the sub-chiefs of the soft coal miners again appealed to Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, for a redress of the wrongs they charged to the Pittsburgh Coal Company, in which Mr. Mellon owned stock. Telegrams were sent to cabinet members Herbert Hoover and James J. Davis, regarding other companies in the area. It was the Pittsburgh Company and the Consolidation Coal Company that led the other and smaller operators into "moral turpitude," according to Mr. Lewis.

"They have torn up wage contracts," he told the world. "They have closed their mines for long periods in order to starve their employees into submission; they have evicted their employees from their homes; they have manned their properties with armed mine guards, search-lights, barbed wire fences, stockades and such paraphernalia of war; they have resorted to the use of unfriendly courts and have sought to bind the workers hand and foot

by the issuance of court injunctions stripping the worker of nearly every right guaranteed him under the Constitution; they have, in substance and effect, conducted a campaign of community terrorism in the isolated mining villages.

"This is a situation which should command the attention of the public and the Government. The stability of the entire bituminous industry is threatened by this reprehensible conspiracy and attack upon the very principle of collective bargaining in the coal industry. The Federal Government has an obligation in the premises. The mine workers simply ask that those coal operators who executed the three-year wage agreement with the United Mine Workers of America be compelled to live up to their contracts and not act the part of industrial knaves and poltroons who seek to render to their employees less than is their just due.

"In Northern West Virginia the mine workers have not yet begun to fight," he continued. "We are in West Virginia and we are going to remain here."

Apparently disregarding the shower of injunctions that followed whenever the West Virginia operators' economic skies clouded, Mr. Lewis left for Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he conferred with a Special Chamber of Commerce committee which was seeking to bring the operators and miners of the hard coal regions together again. But after the conference the only thing that was changed was the calendar. In New York Governor Alfred E. Smith pushed a cigar to one side of his mouth and announced that he was preparing to request the Fair Price Coal Commission of the state to renew its activities in order to stop profiteering.

Various individuals and organizations, some of them mere seekers of fresh newspaper clippings, advanced proposals under which they believed operations could be resumed. Sunday school societies, Pyramidologists, Associations of Wives-from-Flatbush, they all had an idea that "something really should be done." But like the practice of flag-pole sitting, nothing ever came of it.

Chapter Fourteen

PROLONGED NEGOTIATIONS

October–November, 1925

IN HIS STRATEGY John L. Lewis reminded one of the fabulous rapid-fire guns from Antwerp: he could erupt devastatingly in any direction. At no time did he permit the strike issues to fade in the eyes of the public. Instead he continued to hammer the operators, charging that they were gouging consumers and trying to crush trade unionism.

Addressing the American Federation of Labor conference in Atlantic City, he startled America with the charge that anthracite operators were robbing coal purchasers of more than \$16,000,000.00 through a fraudulent and new scale used in sizing coal. He said the resizing scale was "a deal entered into with the retailers" and that it permitted the operators to work off steam sizes, the finest commercial grade, with domestic sizes, and the result was then sold at the old domestic prices. In his sensational address Mr. Lewis said "the anthracite operators are extorting from the public a sum which ranges between \$16,000,000.00 and \$20,000,000.00 annually, to which they have no decent claim. When they appeal to the public for support they come into court with unclean hands. The retailers feared that if they protested they would be cut off and given no more coal at all, and so they are in on the deal."

He paced the rostrum like a tiger in a cage. A young, sleek, man-killing tiger. He ran his hand through his unruly hair, a characteristic gesture, and went on with his charges.

"The public is now paying for the old sizes at the old prices and getting much smaller stuff to burn. They not only lowered the sizes outright, but introduced the square mesh in the breaker screens. This move alone means a reduction of one-fifth in the size of practically every grade of coal. The 'rough edge' of the producers that takes the greatest possible advantage of every emergency and that was found to be shipping sixteen percent dirty coal immediately after the 1923 suspension is using this change in standards as an excuse for a wholesale pouring of the smaller sizes into the larger ones in disregard of both old and new classifications. They will doubtless make this change pay them \$5,000,000.00 annually over and above the grab shared by all the producers.

"The grand total of underhanded profit to be made this way, not counting the amounts to be made by changing to the round mesh and the amounts arbitrarily taken by the more unscrupulous dealers, is \$15,693,790.00 annually, a great deal more than a million dollars a month, which operators are filching from the pockets of the public by selling inferior grades at prices of superior grades."

The anthracite operators' conference called a meeting in New York following the labor leader's charge and denied that the April scale was a deal with the retailers. They added that there was nothing to do but to make a flat denial of the accusation. Nevertheless Mr. Lewis' stirring address won the endorsement of the Federation and the anthracite strike set up repercussions all over the country.

Samuel D. Warriner, chairman of the Anthracite Operators conference, made a speech at a Pennsylvania State Chamber of Commerce meeting in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in which he characterized the charges as "so far removed from the truth as to approach libel."

When this quotation was pointed out to Mr. Lewis a few hours later, with his characteristic abruptness, he shouted, "All right then, Mr. Warriner, sue me."

"Such a suit, I am sure," said Mr. Lewis, "would be highly interesting to the American people and would be extremely illuminating with respect to their meager knowledge of the commercial practices of the anthracite operators."

There was no suit.

But John L. Lewis never let up. In the latter part of October, 1925, when experts said the strike had cost \$190,000,000.00, he made another accusation, this time charging that anthracite operators were trying to persuade consumers to use soft coal as a substitute for hard coal "in order to rob the public with both hands." He said anthracite companies owned soft coal mines and had sold their remaining supply of hard coal at exorbitant prices because of the strike, then for the same reason had asked the public to buy the bituminous substitute at the same high scale. In a letter to Major General Charles W. Berry, chairman of the State Coal Commission, he wrote: "It is the old bear trap arrangement that gets the consumer going or coming. The anthracite operators are the loudest and most vociferous of all the advocates of soft coal as a substitute for anthracite." Then he named prominent entrepreneurs who were heavily interested in both coal classifications, especially in the West Virginia and Central Pennsylvania fields.

Again Chairman Warriner attacked Mr. Lewis' remarks, but, like an expert jai-alai player, Mr. Lewis kept serving them quickly to disconcert the other team in this battle of words. He accused the operators of a plot to sell millions of tons of "bug dust" fuel, which was practically coal powder, a by-product remaining after the consumer already had paid a return on the total mining output. The employers, he announced, had sold thousands of tons of this inferior material, which was just burnable dust, and did not care to settle the strike until they had cleaned their dumps of the stuff.

"Since April the anthracite operators have mixed at least thirty percent inferior coal with the higher grade domestic fuel and sold it at the price formerly paid for the best," he said, in a renewal of his attack on the re-sizing operations. "It would be interesting for every anthracite consumer to look at the coal bin now in his cellar and note the difference in size as compared with what he bought in former years. He will find at least thirty percent of pea coal mixed with the nut coal, for all of which he paid the nut coal price. He will further find the nut coal smaller in size than formerly. Which is just another selfish reason for the Coal Barons to fail to try to settle the strike fairly, at least as long as the public can be robbed."

In large cities, where hard coal was almost universally burned as a health measure, since it caused less soot and smoke, the scarcity of anthracite coal was becoming keenly felt. In New York, Dr. Frank J. Monaghan, health commissioner, announced suspensions of the anti-smoke ordinance allowing the use of substitutes for anthracite coal. The action was taken as a step which would prevent

a fuel crisis as winter set in. A group of his assistants had made a city-wide inspection and Dr. Monaghan said only about 200,000 tons of hard coal were available, hardly sufficient to last through November. Various experts started a series of experiments to determine the best way for householders to burn bituminous coal. As America's largest city went on a soft-coal-burning basis Major Charles W. Berry, of the New York State Coal Commission, conferred with Samuel D. Warriner in Philadelphia. Mr. Warriner assured him that no steps were under way for resumption of negotiations between the operators and mine workers.

"The operators want a show down," Mr. Warriner said, adding that he felt this strike should be the last strike of the miners.

Mr. Lewis also emphatically denied reports that peace negotiations were under way and took advantage of the occasion to announce that the morale of the anthracite miners had never been so high as at that moment. Thomas Kennedy, secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers, made public a denial of the assertion of W. W. Inglis, chairman of the Anthracite Operators Negotiating Committee, that the United Mine Workers were the only group in the American Federation of Labor opposed to arbitration. Mr. Kennedy pointed out that the Federation and its affiliates had unanimously approved the policies of the striking mine workers and said, "the increased prices of coal cannot be justified and as substitutes are being used it is policies such as these which are responsible for the short changing and not the miners." As the strike continued into the month of November letters poured into the White House and to members of Congress demand-

ing that government action be taken to force a resumption of negotiations.

Administration leaders admitted their concern but in the face of these demands President Coolidge indicated that he did not believe the time had come for any change in his hands-off policy. In taking this stand the President was merely shying from the responsibility of condoning higher coal prices. He knew that if the operators came to the White House with a proposal providing for increased wages to the miners contingent upon a Presidential statement that public policy demanded such action, his assent would have given the operators justification for shifting the strike bill to the consumers. Whether he thought this would be transferring the result of the employers' folly to the shoulders of the perpetual innocent bystander, who always "gets it in the neck," the consuming public, no one will ever know.

Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, took a holiday on November 4th when John L. Lewis addressed a crowd of 10,000 miners. He told them a recent conference with W. W. Inglis had shown there had been "no change in the attitude of the operators, no change in their spirit of resistance and no change in their policy to take all and give nothing."

Reverend John J. Curran of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania entered the strike situation when he declared at a conference with Mr. Lewis and Vice-President Murray that the coal situation was "really up to Governor Pinchot." He said the government would probably call employees and employers together before long.

"Perhaps the operators are a little stubborn," he said.

"The men are fair. They are not arbitrary. They are willing to stand by the public but they do not want to concede their rights."

While President Coolidge continued his policy of watchful waiting, it became known that the government was making an investigation to determine whether the coal profiteers were violating Federal laws. John Hays Hammond, who was then acting as chairman of the New England Fuel Commission, assured the President that enough hard coal remained to supply the consumers for two more months. The fuel demands of the majority, he said, could be met by the use of bituminous coal and other substitutes for the rest of the winter. On November 9th Governor Pinchot invited W. W. Inglis and Mr. Lewis to come to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for separate conferences. "I naturally want to talk about the strike," he told reporters.

In New York, Major Charles W. Berry said that the public could hasten an amicable settlement of the differences between the hard coal mine workers and their employees if they would stock up with soft coal. In New Jersey, Governor Silzer also gave impetus to the use of bituminous coal by pledging to support the fight for lower freight rates for soft coal going North from West Virginia.

On Armistice Day Governor Pinchot met Mr. Lewis in Philadelphia and presented a new plan for settlement of the anthracite strike. While neither of the men would discuss their talk, persons close to the governor said he had gained much from the two-hour conference. They added that Mr. Lewis had indicated the miners would not oppose arbitration for settlement of the strike in the near

future if Governor Pinchot served as arbitrator. It was the first evidence that the miners might accept mediation. But Mr. Lewis made it plain that the miners objected to the personnel of the committee representing the operators at the Atlantic City conferences three months before. The Pinchot Plan covered that situation satisfactorily, so the only drawback seemed to be opposition on the part of the operators to Governor Pinchot's acting as head of the Arbitration Board. Following the conference between Mr. Pinchot and Mr. Lewis, Father Curran announced in Wilkes-Barre, "this conference is the beginning of the end." The day after he had talked with the labor leader, Governor Pinchot held a similar session with Mr. Inglis at the Executive Mansion in Harrisburg and then went to his home in Milford for a study of the situation and an attempt to work out a new compromise instead of his original plan. The first plan was said to have provided for the resumption of coal mining in the anthracite district for a period of three or four months, during which time operators and miners might adjust their differences. There was a proviso that any new wage agreement reached would be retroactive.

Royal S. Copeland, who conducts a physician's column in many small newspapers and who is a United States senator at other times, called upon Mr. Coolidge to end the strike. "If I were the President of the United States," he announced, "I would call the mine owners and mine workers into my office tomorrow and by nightfall the strike would be settled."

"I hold," Senator Copeland went on, "that the true purpose of government is to serve humanity. If its purpose is to serve humanity, the thing to do is to say, 'If

you don't let the people have coal, we'll find a way to make you.' ”

In the middle of November, from his New York office, Major Berry said, “Indications are that we are going to have a long suspension of anthracite mining before the mine owners and union mine workers get together,” but he added, “There is no cause for alarm because the available ‘run of the mine’ soft coal as a substitute is virtually unlimited.” Major Berry admitted, however, that the unprecedented demand for soft coal had already caused a shortage resulting in a sharp boost of prices in the New York metropolitan district, bringing the price to \$14.00 a ton.

The Interstate Commerce Commission opened hearings in New York on applications for new through routes and reduction of freight rates for West Virginia coal to New England and Middle Atlantic seaboard points. Answering the opposition of Pennsylvania bituminous operators to these reductions, proponents of the plan said the Keystone mine owners were actuated by a fear of opposition.

Although Father Curran was assiduously conferring with Governor Pinchot and John L. Lewis in an attempt to devise some plan under which the hard coal miners could return to work, there was no announcement of anything promising as day after day of the stoppage went on; the coal supply of the nation dwindled; the picks of the miners accumulated rust and the profiteers swelled with gains like parasitic bugs filling with blood. There were many ideas abroad in the land as to the cause, effect and cure for the situation.

“Why, the situation is largely psychological,” Robert Bruere, an editor of *The Forum*, told a New York audi-

ence. "They are haggling over abstractions. The problem is for the miners to lose their fear of the operators as barons and the operators to lose their fear of the men. They must realize they have a comon stake in the industry."

As one coal miner out in Ohio said when he read Mr. Bruere's remarks, "The miners realize they have a common stake, now the problem is to get the fruits of it. That's what we have been trying to do for years."

The public's stake in the strike was costly and might even be fatal, Mr. Lewis warned in a statement made public by the American Federation of Labor. He referred to the hundreds of tenement houses in the great centers of population where heating plants and chimneys were made for the burning of anthracite coal.

"Any attempt to burn bituminous coal in those chimneys will mean wholesale asphyxiation for entire families," he warned. "This is by reason of the fact that the gases from soft coal cannot be carried away by the vents in the roofs of the domiciles."

The bitter enemies of the United Mine Workers of America, the West Virginia soft coal operators, were not only waxing fat on sales made possible as the public demanded a substitute for hard coal, and by chiseling on the Jacksonville agreement, but even the Interstate Commerce Commission seemed determined to favor them. There was open talk of extending the time period granted them on soft coal freight rates to the East a month before, and of cutting through tariffs even more.

"This is subtle official aid to efforts being made to smash the miners' union," said Mr. Lewis, angrily. "Were the Commission really sincere it would start im-

mediately to cut the anthracite freight rates to Northeastern points, which for some mysterious reason are two to four times higher than those on soft coal. Should the Commission do this, the anthracite operators would not only be able to pay the increase demanded by the miners without added cost to themselves, but also they would be able to give the consumers the benefit of cheaper fuel."

The railroads had long been engaged in an attempt to favor non-union fields, Mr. Lewis said. Next to overdevelopment, he believed it was unfair hauling scales that halted the progress of the coal industry to efficiency and economy. While the railroads may impoverish some communities and enrich others, those favored will in the long run go over the old cycle of overdevelopment and uneconomic operation to the point where favoritism will no longer benefit them, even though it has first ruined their competitors, he pointed out.

"It is truly remarkable," he said, "that railroads being such an intricate subject, we find the executives can consistently favor non-union operators in about the same scale everywhere."

Coal associations had not neglected to point this out to the Interstate Commerce Commission, he said, but powerful influences were put into play and managed to stop even a small rate adjustment. The practice was unfair to the rest of the country, he said, since higher transportation costs would be predicated upon the encouragement by the railroads of "a species of traffic that is economically unsound." Not until "a scientific system arises wherein the railroads serve the markets to which they are properly linked by geography and economics can

the railway machine of the nation hope to operate in such a manner that both stockholders and shippers receive their just dues," he shouted.

Despite his belligerency on nearly everything that came to be mentioned in connection with the strike, as so often occurs with people who have the weight of merit on their side of the balance, Mr. Lewis seemed to be opening an avenue of approach towards a settlement when he said, "the hard coal miners stand ready to negotiate a new wage contract in a spirit of compromise of give and take." They also stood ready, he said, to meet the operators "in amicable negotiations to work out a contract from one to five years' continuous operation of the mines."

First making it clear that his statement was to clarify his stand in reply to various statements attributed to the operators, he outlined the history of the negotiations. No employer had given the public the true state of affairs he insisted, or even told why the strike had occurred in the first place.

"The truth is that the miners presented on July 9, 1925, their proposals as a basis of a new contract to be effective for continuous mining after September 1st. The operators declined all of these proposals and proposed an arbitration of the rate of wages to be paid the men coupled with a proposal that the men continue at the existing wages until the arbitration was concluded," he said.

"The miners replied that there was plenty of time to negotiate a contract to be effective September 1st without a day's cessation of mining and then proposed that the conference proceed to negotiate a contract in a spirit of give and take and compromise. This proposal was declined by the operators and since that time the operators

have declined, and still decline, to negotiate with the miners for the purpose of making a contract by mutual concessions. Both sides to the controversy have always proceeded by collective bargaining to work out a contract and the miners insist that this is their only safety in dealing with their collective employers.

"The operators now propose to scrap this principle, and suggest that the miners agree blindly to work at a rate of wages to be fixed by other persons to be called by the catchy phrase of 'arbitration board.' The miners can never give up the principle that their wages must be fixed when they go to work, by contract with their employers brought about by negotiation in a spirit of compromise and give and take. They stand for that principle now. They believe that the abandonment of that principle means the adoption of semi-slavery. Whenever the representatives of the operators are willing to meet the representatives of the union in amicable negotiations to work out a contract for from one to five years' continuous operation of the mines, the miners stand ready now and have been prepared to meet them."

While Mr. Coolidge's administration repeated the dirge of "hands-off the coal strike," United States Senator William E. Borah of Idaho announced in Washington that he had been investigating mine conditions as far West as Omaha, and that he was "cooperating with another party." He said that he might launch a plan to end the strike before Congress convened the following month, that he was getting in touch with the various centers where the coal problem was of the greatest importance and assembling data on the probability of an acute scarcity. Beyond that the great "voice from the wastes"

would not go. It was already enough to make some of the front pages, anyway.

Old cronies by the cracker barrel and the pot-bellied stove could take no longer over the moves in their checkers than the miners and owners were taking over their economic game. There was more at stake than dollars. But it definitely was the operators' next move and at a New York meeting of the Anthracite Operators' Conference, representing the entire hard coal industry, Mr. Lewis' "give and take statement" was considered. There was little said after the gathering, although Samuel D. Warriner remarked that the operators would "never accept another Jacksonville agreement."

After a second session the employers announced they would not sign an agreement unless it made provision for arbitration of any differences occurring in negotiation of future wage agreements with the miners. The operators' spokesman gave it as the general impression that "the strike must go on some time longer before a state of mind is reached from which any settlement can come."

The spokesman said the attitude of the anthracite operators was absolutely unchanged from what it was at the Atlantic City meeting in July. The representative also referred to a statement made by Mr. Warriner in Philadelphia on October 26th, when he said the anthracite operators were prepared to make 1925 a year for a finish fight to reduce labor cost per ton. This came from the belief that prices to the consumer had reached their peak and the miners must be forced to pledge that they would not strike at the expiration of future contracts while renewal of the contract was still under discussion.

There was an undercurrent of feeling among the em-

ployers that some answer should be made to the union leader's statement, but it was explained that "cooler heads had prevailed since it would be merely a swapping of insults." While the determination of the operators to go on to a finish fight thus became known, there was a demand from hundreds of organizations that the dispute be settled. One of the first of these resolutions was passed by the National Council of Traveling Salesmen, representing 900,000 commercial travelers. At a special meeting in New York they called upon the disputants to adjudicate their differences and give relief to the public. Wise-cracking columnists commented that it would be a good thing at the same time to give the public relief from jokes about traveling salesmen.

Chapter Fifteen

MINERS' FIGHT FOR AMERICAN STANDARDS

November, 1925–February, 1926

"ONE REASON IT IS SO HARD for Americans generally to adequately envisage the labor problems in the coal fields," said Mr. Lewis in his book "The Miners' Fight For American Standards," which was on sale in late 1925, "is the fact that so many of the conditions against which the union has fought are so un-American and out of tune with American thought."

His views on labor relations were widely quoted because the anthracite coal strike had now dragged on interminably. Beginning with the major premise that life as Americans live it is two-thirds dependent upon coal, Mr. Lewis showed how the fate of the United Mine Workers of America inevitably would, to a large extent, affect the welfare of America. Reviewers on the conservative newspapers seemed astounded to note that the miners' leader "speaks as one capitalist to another," and that he praised the capitalistic system for enriching workers, multiplying the so-called middle class and converting the proletariat into capitalists.

Indeed his little volume was more than a mere reiteration of principles and aims. Pages of it were lifted bodily from the union's history, so painstakingly written. So while they huddled at cold and cheerless hearths

Americans could read a lucid, terse account of the diggers' views on what precipitated the strike.

"Nature has refused to standardize rocks, slate and men," Mr. Lewis said, but he added that the solution of most of the problems of American life could be found in a return to first principles, a reassertion in practice of the rules laid down by the Fathers of the Republic.

While both hard and soft coal prices continued to advance and appeals were made to operators and miners without success, Mr. Lewis pointed out that selfishness and greed on the part of certain unscrupulous operators had perpetuated a system inevitably resulting in either feast or famine in the coal industry. He insisted that the reactionary element in the problem was the fuel mined by non-union labor, and said that every such car of fuel was a malignant influence. He pointed out that in Logan County, West Virginia, economic feudalism prevailed and the sheriff had 250 deputies "to run things his way while the cost was taken out of every ton of coal mined." Mr. Lewis characterized it "government by terror and peonage of workers, a regime of private government backed by an army of mercenaries."

As an example of the "subtle influence of profits from serfs," he gave excerpts from a speech by William H. Coolidge, chairman of the board of the Island Creek Coal Company, who had large interests in Logan County mines. Addressing the seventh annual meeting of the New England Wholesale Coal Association Mr. Coolidge said that if all the coal mines in the country became union mines Mr. Lewis "would become a bigger man than President Coolidge and the miners would have this country by the throat even more than now."

He said it was the deliberate intent of the United Mine Workers of America to steal the country's mines for the workers and that the Government of the United States had no more reason for letting the union get control of the coal industries works than "I myself would have to welcome a burglar into my house."

"No," said Mr. Lewis, "but maybe he would welcome a doctor to his home under certain conditions when the patient is very, very sick."

The purpose of the union as Mr. Lewis outlined it was to make it possible for economic and properly equipped mines operated by free labor under an American form of government to make reasonable and continuous profits. He said it was the task of the capitalists to force American standards upon the industry and to eliminate the non-union mining competition.

As the stoppage went on day after day and the women and children of the strikers' families suffered, ministers of various mining communities made public appeals for the diggers to go back to work. Secretary of Labor James J. Davis added the weight of his official position to an "appeal to reason" addressed to both sides in the controversy. But the miners would not accept any termination of their industrial warfare if it meant giving up the increased wages and better working conditions to which they felt they were entitled.

There were a few instances of disorder in the coal fields and the workers insisted they were being brought about by some outside element, probably communistic influence. To make matters worse, the soft coal dispute had again become acute. Mr. Lewis wrote a letter to Mr. Coolidge protesting violations of the Jacksonville agreement. In

somewhat vague language the labor leader asked the President whether, if Federal intervention was refused, the miners might not believe "our own efforts in that direction might be considered justified." This phraseology set reporters on edge but Mr. Lewis would not clarify it. On November 24th President Coolidge decided to act and he wrote Mr. Lewis saying he would reply fully after he had studied the letter. He finally outlined his views in a letter to Mr. Lewis on December 4th, but the White House refused to disclose the text of the correspondence. Apparently it was feared the publication of the President's plan would embarrass the efforts of Pennsylvania's Governor Pinchot to bring peace to the hard coal region.

President Harding had said that the coal miners held the nation in their grasp and now in his annual message to Congress, President Coolidge emphasized the lack of administrative power to deal with the coal strike. Under the existing laws he pointed out that the President was without power to deal with the emergency and the attitude of the government must be one of humble supplication. The newspapers of the nation set off broadsides against the frozen little man from Vermont saying that the Chief Executive had not much to say that was energetic or hopeful. But some of them exercised wishful prophecy in stating their belief that Mr. Coolidge was reserving more vigorous utterances for a reply to Mr. Lewis' letter.

At the end of three months of idleness in the collieries Governor Pinchot was still vainly trying to commandeer mines by law but a decision by the Attorney General had gone against him; a committee of business men from the anthracite district had been unable to effect any kind of

arbitration between the strikers and employers, and various spokesmen declared that a shifting of the entire grounds of discussion and negotiation would be necessary. The public distrusted both parties to the stoppage. There was destitution in Central Pennsylvania, and suffering was widespread.

On December 13th Governor Pinchot announced he would call a special session of the legislature to declare the anthracite coal industry a public utility. On the same date a number of Luzerne County legislators submitted a plan for ending the strike. Although the operators immediately accepted the plan Mr. Lewis rejected it saying, "it is simply the operators' plan wrapped up in a new package."

That he would fight any such plan until the day of doom was indicated when he told the Philadelphia Real Estate Board that he was organizing the union in expectation of a continuance of the struggle to the fall of 1926 or spring of 1927. It was his belief, he said, that the anthracite strike had developed into a state of siege, with operators and certain financial interests ready to pay \$1,000,000,000.00 to crush the union. It was his bellowed opinion that the miners had no other alternative but to accept this challenge, making it a finish fight.

"Funds will be provided so that our hungry will be fed and our naked will be clothed," said Mr. Lewis. "This statement does not constitute a threat; far from it. It is simply an expression of the unconquerable spirit of the men who labor in the colleries of the anthracite industry. Some well-meaning people bemoan the fact that there will be suffering and sacrifice. Let them carry such tales to the ears of the money-grubbing financiers who sit in

their counting houses and plot the enslavement of workers in a great industry."

The union chief rumbled on in a voice that shook the chandeliers, regretting the suffering and the sacrifice but reminding his audience that in all of history's struggles where a great principle had been at stake there had been such hardships. He went on to relate with the woes of the world in his voice that the miners were fighting for the future of their children and the uplift of American social standards.

"The actual control of the anthracite industry is vested in but a small handful of men, far removed from public influence, secure from public attack or even public mention and whose power is absolute. They have issued the decree that the anthracite mine workers shall either voluntarily surrender their elements of strength or that the union shall be wiped out," Mr. Lewis said. "The financial interests have organized the industry to exact the last farthing of loot from a patient public. Mine workers receive \$4.62 for their service in producing a ton of anthracite coal, which represents the total labor cost. The public in normal periods pays from \$12.00 to \$16.00 for the same product. A gross charge of approximately \$10.00 per ton is thus added by the producers, railroads and wholesale and retail distributors to the price received by the mine workers."

The public, said Mr. Lewis, pays this amount from its own pockets and on the basis of 90,000,000 tons of annual production the operators get an annual income of \$600,000,000.00 over what they pay to the mine workers. There is, too, he said, an additional \$100,000,000.00 as payment for steam size fuel.

He asked the audience to add to the \$700,000,000.00 already calculated the fixed charges of the industry, such as maintenance, interest and taxation, and he pointed out that the total loss to the anthracite capitalists would be \$1,000,000,000.00 if the mines remained closed until September 21, 1926. This staggering sum the operators and the financial interests behind them were prepared to pay, he believed, in order to break the spirit and resistance of their employees.

"In this program the anthracite operators ignore every element of public interest. They do not stop to compute the gigantic losses and the extreme inconvenience which the public will endure while such a merciless policy is being carried out. They have engaged in a mad adventure possessed of a greater degree of industrial bloodlust than ever before was witnessed in the history of American industry," said Mr. Lewis.

"Mine workers have demonstrated their own good faith in their unqualified acceptance of a peace plan proposed by the Governor of Pennsylvania in the name of the people of this Commonwealth. The anthracite operators spurned the plan, insulted the Governor of this great State, and have filled the air with their jeering, ribald laughter. Upon their heads therefore be the responsibility for the conditions that now and will exist in this country. If they believe they can drive the anthracite mine workers like cringing quarry slaves back to their death-dealing coleries then the operators and their advisers have but the vision of fools."

Governor Pinchot's threat to seek governmental regulation of the coal industry was the objective of a verbal barrage by the operators who met in Philadelphia on Decem-

ber 18th. In saving a few shells for John L. Lewis, Major W. W. Inglis, chairman of the Operators' Negotiating Committee, said the union leader was indulging in "his time-worn formula of comparing the labor costs of producing a ton of coal with the price paid by some consumer in a very distant city, and he forgets to say that to the labor costs must be added the cost of material, administrative expenses, taxes, insurance, depletion, depreciation and so on."

Mr. Inglis said that until Mr. Lewis became head of the mine workers' organization in 1920 the anthracite operators and their employees settled their differences by collective bargaining.

"But since Mr. Lewis has been in charge of the union's affairs, nothing has been accomplished by that process and we have had three strikes in the last four years," Mr. Inglis said. "Mr. Lewis glibly talks about continuing the struggle until the fall of 1926 or the spring of 1927. Once more he furnishes evidence of his organization's interests in the bituminous field. The anthracite strike had its beginning in Mr. Lewis' effort to regain lost ground in the bituminous field. When he talks of continuing the stoppage to the expiration of the Jacksonville agreement, it is apparent that the dominating influence in the present controversy is still bituminous and not anthracite coal."

To this serious charge John L. Lewis answered ho hum in effect.

"The Inglis brainstorm should not be taken seriously by the public. His tirade of abuses against myself is scarcely worthy of comment. He was probably in a highly nervous state when he dictated his interview."

Senator "Fighting Bob" La Follette did some clever sniping on the White House lawn in an issue of La Follette's magazine. He commended Governor Pinchot's plan for settlement of the strike and in dealing with "Careful Cal" he wrote: "Through the mysterious 'White House Spokesman' it is announced that the President is terribly insulted that he should be asked this embarrassing question. In this entire coal strike situation it is clear to those who know the entire history of the Boston police strike, that the President is running true to form. The irony, perhaps the only humor in the entire miserable situation, is that John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, was the only labor leader of national prominence who supported Calvin Coolidge in the last campaign."

While the resumption of negotiations between the owners and miners broke upon the issue of consideration of Governor Pinchot's plan for operation of the mines, William Green, as head of the Federation of Labor, appealed to members of various unions for financial aid to the strikers. He denounced the operators and dictators in general, whether of Moscow or of Rome.

In an editorial entitled "Between Dictators" a conservative newspaper said in part:

"When President Green denounced the dictators he was sure of applause. But doubt arises if the principles which he proclaims are applied to his own household.

"Take the coal strike. From the outset the operators have stood for arbitration, for every test that reason and justice can bring to bear. But the answers of the miners is force, force wielded by a dictator.

"John L. Lewis is the Mussolini of the United Mine

Workers. Is Mr. Green of a softer fibre? When occasion serves, he can talk graciously of mutual understanding, of cooperation between employers and employed. Yet, in this very letter he denounces Mussolini because 'his first action after being declared absolute dictator was to enact a compulsory arbitration law.' On abstract grounds, those who own the mines have a right to operate them so long as they observe the laws of the land; those who depend on coal for their winter warmth and for food have a right to constant supply at fair prices.

"But the very concrete Mussolini of the Mine Workers steps in and says that the mines shall not operate except on terms which he refuses to submit to the arbitrament of reason and justice. Under his dictatorship, it is not only his people who suffer; the industry by which they live is seriously impaired and the nation as a whole is sorely taxed. Weeks ago Mr. Lewis threatened the President of the United States with the added calamity of a soft coal strike and still nothing is done. Dictatorships differ; but everywhere institutions once approximately free are bursting their bounds."

Sometimes it looks as though a union leader is blowing hot and cold on an issue and perhaps he is. But the strategy necessary for success in this field requires a combination of sorcery, psychology and soreheadedness. As good an example as any occurred when Mr. Lewis withdrew his insistence on the Pinchot proposals as a basis for a peace parley and sent a telegram of acceptance to Mayor John J. Durkin, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, answering the appeal of pastors from the mining communities that the conflicting parties get together. In Scranton his message was held to be the "culmination of a week of alternating

hope and despair on the part of miners, operators and the coal region communities."

At the same time a new miners' union reared its head in the bituminous fields of Western Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh District Federated Miners' Association voted to disavow allegiance to the United Mine Workers of America, and declared war to the death on the old union as then constituted. The rebels severely condemned "the policies of John L. Lewis, who is blamed for present conditions in the union fields.

"Through his leadership, strikes and discontentment are prevalent in nearly every State in which the union exists. While in contrast there are peace, contentment and prosperity in non-union fields."

"The one thing certain about a man of Mr. Lewis' type is that nothing is certain," said an editorial entitled "Santa Claus in Scranton" in a newspaper of the period. "In both hard and soft coal fields his rule has been rule or ruin. It has long been evident that his re-election to chief command is at stake. He may choose to die fighting but in the coal fields they do not seem to expect that. His agreement to confer is interpreted as a willingness to accept that impartial arbitration which from the outset he has refused."

The conference to which Mr. Lewis had just agreed began at the Union League Club in New York with a proposal from Chairman Alvin Markle that both sides acknowledge public interest transcended that of the owners and miners. Throughout one whole afternoon and evening Mr. Lewis argued against several points he thought were proposals of arbitration, which the miners had consistently opposed since they walked out four

months before. The miners several times proposed adoption of Governor Pinchot's plan while the operators objected to governmental interference and pointed to the no meddling measures in the Markle plan. Discussions continued but the conference was still deadlocked when the miners proposed an agreement to leave complete regulation of the anthracite industry in the hands of the Government of the United States of America. This was a strikingly revolutionary proposal at the moment, widely at variance with the often expressed policy of Mr. Lewis, but the owners refused, saying that it would result in Congress fixing the prices for coal and wages for miners.

The miners, in their turn refused the suggestion of Mr. Markle to submit various plans proposed to former Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. The employees claimed that such action would be making Mr. Hughes arbitrator for the whole controversy. The workers submitted a revised plan drafted after the pattern of Mr. Markle but embodying many of the salient features of the Pinchot plan. This, too, was voted down.

John L. Lewis could see plainly that the ground had not been prepared, as yet, for a complete and amicable settlement. So with all the deliberation of a grandfather clock he wound up smoothly and struck several timely blows. He charged the operators with a final desperate effort to break up the conference and attacked them for having "stubbornly resisted every suggestion of the mine workers that they arbitrate their profit upon the inflated capitalization of the industry and that they arbitrate, too, the price which they charge the public for coal."

Mr. Lewis said the miners had refused the operators proffer of arbitration because they deemed it an instru-

ment to effect wage reductions. He followed this statement with the charge that the operators had entered into a previous agreement among themselves not to sign a wage contract unless it permitted the poorest companies to operate mines with high royalty charges and inefficient management. And so on January 12, 1926, the feeble lamp of understanding that had been lighted for an instant in the hard coal industry was blown out by the chill winds of discord, which so often emanated from the cheerless hard coal shafts. And the parley ended with bitterness on both sides. Major Inglis blamed failure on the policy of John L. Lewis.

Human misery lay over the Pennsylvania anthracite fields as thick as jam on a schoolboy's crust. John L. Lewis felt no shame, but sorrow, concerning those conditions. Yet many another man would have stayed away from so much grief in which he was involved. It was typical that he, however, should address two mass meetings of miners and their families at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the center of the pitiful cries for bread.

He had been the target of a personal attack calculated to make his own membership believe he was responsible for their misery in order to maintain his control over them. Expert press agents, and lawyers who swore with the name of Lewis, had castrated him verbally, started whispering campaigns against him. Months of futile waiting had gone by, the operators safe in their luxurious homes, knowing that it was a siege for the miners. This, too, was against John L. Lewis. But he dared.

He said the operators could never ruin the union even though the strike continued for a year. He reiterated that the miners were opposed to arbitration, and he told why,

for the thousandth time. His hardy but hungry audience cheered him. Then he turned to the personal attacks upon him.

"As for myself, it matters not much whether I carry on or fall in combat. My own personality is but incidental to the major problems of human life and human relationship which are involved in this great struggle," he said. "If my own hand should falter, and the mine workers' colors waver, the staff will be seized by another with even stronger hand and carried to victory in the vanguard of the anthracite workers' serried ranks."

There were reporters present who had measured many a man, and they not only believed, with the audience, that John L. Lewis was sincere; they were willing to compare Wilkes-Barre with Gettysburg, that Civil War with this one, that great leader with John L. Lewis. Who could rightfully say which was dictator, which was unselfish, which was more embroiled in a battle for human good?

"The net result of the operators' prodigious effort has been utter failure, except as they glory and delight in human sacrifices and human suffering," he said. And he challenged any representative of the operators to a public debate of the entire matter.

There was a favorable reaction in the press after this bold gem of strategy, an example of the leader's willingness to gamble everything. For if his audience had revolted against him, or even heckled him briskly, he would have shot his bolt as a leader of labor. Mr. Lewis, however, generally was very bad medicine for the verbal picadors in any audience.

Calvin Coolidge, who sometimes utilized the slogan, "keep cool with Coolidge," was carrying it too far in his

"do nothing" attitude in the coal strike, according to a great percentage of the newspapers. In the House of Representatives measures were introduced to empower the President to intervene, although some of the politicians suggested various ways the Chief Executive could effect a settlement without additional grants of authority. Mr. Coolidge continued peeking out of the White House windows at the snipers on the lawn, saying nothing, letting that fabulous fellow "High Authority" do all the talking for him.

But due to the pressure of public opinion, which, once aroused in this country seems to be Democracy at its best, a settlement was coming soon, and nearly everyone knew it. Both sides were to be forced to make concessions, whether the President hated to make a decision or not. So when E. J. Lynett, publisher of the *Scranton* (Pa.) *Times*, made an offer for peace, Mr. Lewis immediately accepted. But just as suddenly, the owners refused. Mr. Lewis then asked Alvin Markle, spokesman for the operators, for another conference. This was accepted, and there was a general change of outlook as conferences began at Philadelphia. Secretary of Labor James J. Davis exerted some pressure, and the miners finally made a concession: they would submit to arbitration, if it were agreed in advance that acceptance would be voluntary, and if a fact-finding body were to be provided for. But the operators held out for compulsory arbitration; the issue snagged the meeting, and an adjournment was called for a week.

"This no longer is a strike," said Mr. Lewis, "it is a lockout." But, of course, Mr. W. W. Inglis insisted the onus for the hitch in things should fall upon Mr. Lewis,

"who wants his own untrammelled power." In the meantime the leader of the miners visited Governor Pinchot, to let the operators know that the Pennsylvania governor's plan still was churning around and, with the right sort of pressure, could be pushed through the Pennsylvania legislature to cause the operators, at the very least, a great deal of embarrassment.

"Did you discuss future strike settlement plans or was your conversation directed to the negotiations of the past few weeks?" the reporters asked Mr. Pinchot as he met them in the presence of Mr. Lewis. The union leader removed a badly mistreated cigar from his lips, bowed in courtly fashion to the hesitating governor, and replied:

"Mr. Pinchot's mind always runs along conservative lines and he doesn't think in the past." The governor bowed in return, and there was no statement. The operators were left in wonderment, with no new ammunition for the battle lines. Mr. Lewis knew when silence was golden and when it could be turned into pointed steel.

Chapter Sixteen

DISASTER AND DESERTION

February, 1926–February, 1927

SUPPOSE THAT YOU WERE making a trip by train and you encountered John L. Lewis at about this period in his life, the first of February, 1926. And suppose further that you had never been introduced to Labor's Moses, but you were interested in what he had to say or in his histrionics. For wherever he went, Mr. Lewis was good theater.

He was then forty-six, so powerfully built that he looked fairly short, though he stood almost six feet tall. He was active, and he could leap up on a desk with a ten-foot start, and he had the swagger and dash of Teddy Roosevelt. He probably would have been wearing a large Western hat perched on the back of his head as you walked up and introduced yourself.

In those days he would talk to anyone who was not a crank or a nit-wit, unless he had something more important to do. Even then, sometimes he would put off his duties and talk.

So he would unsmilingly say he was glad to meet you, offer a hand and listen courteously as you tried to start a conversation. If you succeeded the result would be a highlight of your life.

Many famous people have admitted that they met John L. Lewis in this way. They said that he never restricted

conversations to unionism and they found him well versed on nearly every subject, interested in everything. They said he would sit on a washbasin in a crowded pullman train and extemporize for hours on his views.

Whatever he discussed seemed to assume an easier understanding for his listeners. But naturally he could talk with greater authority on labor problems.

Primarily the United Mine Workers of America insisted upon maintenance of high wage standards in the interests of its own membership and Mr. Lewis always admitted that freely. The theory of our system of free enterprise, he said, is that the ultimate prosperity of all is assured by the utmost endeavor of each to better his own condition.

One of the subjects that would set him off into animated exposition for hours was the survival of pre-capitalistic mentality which caused so many people to resent high wages. Mr. Lewis was wont to point out that trade unionism was an integral part of capitalism, was in fact a phenomenon similar to the corporation and the aims of both were identical: gain. Therefore he often expressed bewilderment when people applauded efforts of capital to get more profits and avoid losses and deplored those of labor to do exactly the same thing. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lewis would point out, these people sometimes expected labor to voluntarily sacrifice its wages to increase the profits of others. He termed this an example of a feudal mind speaking in a capitalistic age.

He was able and quite willing to trace the significance of the revolution in economic thought to an inclusion of the consumers' standpoint. He would point out that the purchasing power of the American masses is the pivot upon

which our whole economic system turns and that a reduction in purchasing power is instantly registered not only in the distress of masses but in the shrinkage of profits and the destruction of capital value.

These thoughts, so orthodox today, were enough to create a furore in the early 1920's when there were so many advocates of the low wage theory. Mr. Lewis would point out that cities which had long been noted for the open-shop proclivities of their Chambers of Commerce no longer advertised that they had low wage rates.

It had become a fact that capital could no longer go to low wage communities since capitalists had learned sales would be restricted in low wage markets.

In a studious manner the labor leader would show, sometimes with charts and diagrams, how the higher wage rate of union workers were accounted for by the greater amount of power per man employed in moving the machinery with which he worked and how the wage rates of various countries compared to the amount of capital invested for each worker hired.

And inevitably Mr. Lewis would demonstrate that the worker not only was entitled to share in this greater production but that if he did not share in such a manner that he could help to dispose of the products as a consumer the whole system would crash.

"You can rest assured that if the mining industry, which is the basic industry in America, be long kept out of pace with the rest of the country, out of step with the big machine in the matter of wages it will slow up the whole works," Mr. Lewis said in one of the train lectures. "The industrial system is too closely interdependent to admit of such incongruities being long maintained. The American

wage scale is the perfect citadel of isolation, beyond the power of princes, politicians or pacifists to tear down."

Like so many men who are not afraid to have an opinion, in a face-to-face interview, John L. Lewis could win many followers. But when he excoriated the operators for an appeal to the miners to return to work, an editorial writer, who himself could have benefited by unionization, wrote:

"In a characteristic flood of vituperation, Mr. John L. Lewis calls the anthracite operators 'union-busting labor-baitors,' because they are 'attempting to force the mine workers to agree to arbitrating their wages.'

"From the outset five months ago, the operators have declared themselves willing to recognize the union, expressing deep appreciation of the good it has accomplished and can accomplish. They have as willingly conceded the principle of collective bargaining.

"Mr. Lewis charges the operators 'have their men locked out and refuse to permit them to return to work.'

"The truth is that the operators are eager to have them return at once at the old wages and are willing to grant even an increase if properly qualified arbitrators decide that it is justified. When the miners learn the truth about collective bargaining and how it is faring, they will know that the real labor-baitor is John L. Lewis.

"If the union is eventually 'bust,' it will be Mr. Lewis who is responsible."

Just when it seemed anybody's guess whether the union could endure or not, and 160 days of stoppage had cost the nation more than \$1,000,000.00, there came a savior for both contending forces. He was Richard F. Grant, president of the Susquehanna Colliery Company, and vice-president of the M. A. Hanna Company, of Cleveland,

Ohio. When the conferences resumed in Philadelphia after a week of adjournment, it was Mr. Grant who talked with both sides and started each to writing down the points they could concede.

Meanwhile the Copeland Coal Resolution had been passed by the Senate, giving President Coolidge power to intervene in the strike, but he promptly disclaimed it, saying intervention would only create bitterness on both sides. The Pennsylvania legislature had failed to agree on a bill making anthracite coal mining a public utility, and had started all over again.

After four days and nights in drafting a contract agreeable to both sides, Mr. Grant was successful and a settlement was announced on February 12th. The operators agreed not to insist upon compulsory arbitration.

The Full Scale Committee of forty members from the three hard coal districts, together with the entire membership of the Anthracite Operators' Conference then ratified the following points:

At the scale of wages prevailing at the expiration of the previous contract there was to be an immediate resumption of work, a contract being signed for four and one-half years, to expire August 31, 1930.

Upon the request of either side there would be modification of the agreement once a year.

If there was no agreement on revision within thirty days, the issues were to be referred to a board of two, which possessed full powers. The board was to be named by each side choosing a man from a list of three provided by the opposing faction. This board was given ninety days to arrive at a decision, but if there was a deadlock, it was to choose an umpire and a majority vote was to be binding.

The standing board of conciliation was to work out a system of cooperation and efficiency for the industry.

As agreed in a contract made two years before, there was to be equalization of wages, as applied to the various classifications of mine workers.

After it was over, Mr. Grant, the real hero, praised President Coolidge for his "great common sense and wisdom in not intervening despite the passage of the Copeland bill in the Senate."

Mr. Lewis was very happy, with the strike called off on his forty-sixth birthday. He saw the accord as the dawn of a new era in the industry and said the agreement was satisfactory and constructive. He had fought the longest strike ever attempted in hard coal mining without an appreciable defection in his ranks and he was glad that the new pact provided machinery "for the exercise of reason in the industry."

"The settlement assures stability and continuous operation for a five-year period, the longest agreement ever made in the coal business," he said. "The Board of Conciliation is given broad powers and is instructed to work out a reciprocal program which will restore a greater degree of confidence and harmony, and thus should result in reduced operating costs.

"Such a result will be a contribution sadly needed, and if both parties work in good faith toward the attainment of the desired objective it will result in the industry being placed upon a higher plane and commanding the respect of the coal-consuming public."

He was bombarded by telegrams of congratulation. One of his admirers sent him a copy of Sandburg's "Life of Lincoln," and addressed it to "The Lincoln of La-

bor." Another telegram, from Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, read:

"I desire to get married the day the strike is settled. Please advise. A. J. S."

Although he did not know A. J. S., Mr. Lewis sent off the following wire:

"A. J. S., Re your wire: Get married today. John L. Lewis."

As he stood in a room filled with flowers sent by his admirers, miners in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, rushed from their homes to stand on street corners in the freezing weather and cheer the ending of the strike. Their membership was supposed to ratify the settlement within a week, and newspapers were predicting what Mr. Lewis would tell them. The telegrams spoke of the "greatest victory ever won by a labor leader here or abroad," but was it? What had happened to the checkoff system of dues payment, and the wage increases?

"Mr. Lewis will explain to the miners that the plan is substantially the one he offered several times to the operators," prophesied the *New York Times*. "He is also expected to announce that the miners' leaders have successfully resisted pressure toward a wage reduction. He will probably assure the coal diggers that the four-and-a-half-year contract insures against a wage reduction unless one is agreed to by the miners, a most remote contingency."

In an editorial the newspaper said Mr. Lewis was beaten at every point in the new contract.

"Of all the hollow claims those put forth in behalf of President Lewis are the most empty. He is actually hailed as 'The Lincoln of Labor,' " the newspaper said.

"He ordered the strike in order to get higher wages.

The men go back at the old wage. He demanded the checkoff in its most rigorous form; if he gets it at all, it is only in a modified and remote way. For months he vowed to high heaven that he would never consent to arbitration. Yet he finally put his name to an agreement which stipulates that controversies not capable of being settled directly shall be referred to a board . . . to all intents and purposes a board of arbitration. It is hard to imagine a retreat more complete or a defeat more absolute."

But whether it was a good contract or a poor one, Mr. Lewis was quite capable of presenting it favorably when the miners met at Scranton, Pennsylvania, to consider ratification. The Lucas lion roared and tossed his mane at the critics, his face an alternate scarlet and a deathly ash. What did they mean, arbitration?

"We vowed at the meeting here last June that we would not return with a contract that contained the hated word 'arbitration.' It does not contain that word, the statement of any man to the contrary notwithstanding. It is a fifty-fifty agreement, leaving everything to mutual arrangement. It contains not one whit or jot of arbitration "

The checkoff?

"In deference to the dislike of the operators to the word 'checkoff' the term was not used. Instead a clause was written referring the demands of operators and miners to the Conciliation Board. Whether we wrote checkoff in or left it out, that is precisely what we mean when we say in the agreement that we shall work out a reciprocal program of cooperation and efficiency.

"Now this is an honorable document. It contains certain phrases that are meaningless, because certain people wanted them there for reasons known only to themselves. We did

not want to humiliate anybody. When the representative of the operators came to my room and said that they were willing to give up arbitration, I said: 'I'm glad of it and will talk more with you.'

"We organized the strike in such a way that we took into consideration that it might take a year to beat the anthracite operators, but defeat them we would. It would have been a great price to pay for a wage contract but if that price were required, we were prepared to go through with it in order to retain the rights of our people. It would have been no embarrassment to have continued a year or longer if necessary.

"My statements have been criticized as being belligerent and uncompromising. They are not that. They are the statements of a man who believed in the loyalty of his people and was ready to stay with them as long as they stuck to him."

The agreement was ratified by a vote of 698 to 2.

Feeling greatly indebted to Governor Pinchot, Mr. Lewis campaigned for him when he ran for the United States Senate. It was a part of the usual policy of union leaders to help labor's friends and fight her enemies. That was about as far as any of them cared to go in those days.

It was just at this period that Mr. Lewis realized a labor leader is in the position of the man who grabbed the bull by the tail: he doesn't like the position, it's hard work requiring ceaseless vigilance, but to let go would be very unpleasant indeed. The coal industry was sick. Wildcat overexpansion caused by the war alternated with spasmodic and monopolistic compression.

Through an apparently carefully laid plan the operators were managing to shut down the union mines to operate

non-union ones, periodically. Then when they re-opened the old mines union men lost their jobs by the thousands. The Interstate Commerce Commission seemed definitely to be gunning against the right of collective bargaining in its decisions.

"They are smiting me hip and thigh," Mr. Lewis told one of his friends. "Right merrily I shall return their blows."

And he did, though for a long time it was to be a gallant but fruitless fight.

The mighty union of the miners was melting away. Fierce factional fights raged like a fire in a celluloid factory. Mr. Lewis started to wade in, and the first counter-attack was directed at the Interstate Commerce Commission, which had just heard a recommendation from Examiner Disque to deny the Illinois and Indiana coal shippers' petition for a readjustment of rates to the Chicago market. The operators sought a widening of the rate between what they had to pay and the hauling scale being given the West Virginia and Kentucky operators of non-union mines.

Mr. Disque had reported that the existing rates were not unfair and that the miners' wage scale was so much higher than that paid in non-union fields the operators were having difficulties in meeting their competitors' prices.

"I have never understood it to be a part of the functions of the Interstate Commerce Commission to attempt to batter down the wages of those who labor," said Mr. Lewis in a letter to the Commission. "Nor have I understood it to be its function to permit its decisions on rate questions to be made the vehicle by either party to an industrial wage controversy, as has been done in this instance.

"Existing rates are those fixed by the United States

Bituminous Coal Commission in 1920 and it is extraordinary indeed that an official representative of the Interstate Commerce Commission would now openly denounce the wage scale that was formulated and handed to the industry by another Government agency. This is an amazing and gratuitous attack upon the living standards of mine workers."

There was no doubt about it, the Interstate Commerce Commission was the crux of many of his troubles. But he saw an excellent chance to crack down on another of his enemies when he found that Frank Farrington, the president of the Illinois union, was on the payroll of at least one operator.

Mr. Lewis immediately requested the Executive Board of the Illinois District to dismiss Farrington. The specific charge, made over Mr. Lewis' signature, was that Farrington was receiving \$25,000.00 a year from the Peabody Coal Company of Chicago. The Executive Board cabled Farrington, who was then in Paris, and wanted to know if he intended to resign.

"I will not permit the Executive Board to dictate where I shall seek employment," came the reply from Farrington. At the same time the Peabody Coal Company officials denied that Farrington was connected with the firm, but Mr. Lewis brought proof that he was and the Illinois leader was deposed. Thus one thorn was removed from the side of the "Big Boy," as his followers called him, but the American Federation of Labor Convention, which convened in Detroit, Michigan, the most militantly open shop city in America at the time, provided many more barbs.

Mr. Lewis managed to learn the contents of a letter sent

by Albert F. Coyle, acting editor of the *Locomotive Engineers' Journal* to a friend in the organization. Mr. Coyle had been attempting to secure the election of John Brophy, a district mine leader, over Mr. Lewis and he outlined plans for his maneuvers. Storming onto the platform, his arms flailing the air, Mr. Lewis "exposed" Mr. Coyle as a leader of "Red intrigue."

He told his spellbound audience that this was not the first time the United Mine Workers had been threatened with a crackup at the hands of Moscow's agents. He recalled the Nova Scotia episode, where he suspended a union of 9,000 men for "communistic activities." And he mentioned the fight he had given the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers for employing non-union labor at mines the organization's membership owned.

"Mr. Coyle is the editor of a scab-herding, strikebreaking organization, to wit, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and he is boring from within to break up the United Mine Workers," charged Mr. Lewis in a voice that came on like a bayou hurricane. "He is the defender of these policies. He is now interested in forming a paper, the *National Miner*. What for? To decry the activities of the United Mine Workers and their policy."

Pointing to W. Z. Foster, who was leaning over a gallery rail, head in hand, Mr. Lewis shouted, "All day there has been in the gallery the arch prince of communism in the United States, who makes annual visits to Russia to make his reports and receive his orders. He is here to see how well his agents have put over his propaganda."

Mr. Lewis was cheered, and a small knot of friends also cheered Mr. Foster, who seemed to enjoy it all, even though President William Green remarked from the ros-

trum that the Federation would not approve recognition of Soviet Russia until that government "quits making war upon us." Mr. Foster promised to reply, even as Mr. Lewis' friends were passing the word around how capably the miners' chief had tied Mr. Coyle into a knot, smashed the campaign of Mr. Brophy, and almost turned the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers into an agency of the Soviet, all with the help of an intercepted letter.

Mr. Foster said the American Federation of Labor was rotten to the core. Turning to Mr. Lewis he admonished the leader to look after his own organization, "since he has lost 100,000 members in the past eighteen months."

Mr. Coyle denied Mr. Lewis' charges when given the opportunity. But the points the president of the United Mine Workers of America had chosen to make were scored. Officers of the Federation were re-elected and the convention voted an unlimited per capita tax upon the constituent unions to provide funds for organization of non-union shops.

Then the convention members toured the Ford automobile plant. The delegates gaped at the *deus ex machina* and asked how the American Federation of Labor could ever hope to organize the manipulators of such mechanism under the jurisdictionally jealous craft union setup.

"Each man would have to be his own union," one of the men replied.

That lesson was not lost upon John L. Lewis, and neither was the one of the bituminous coal mines, where operators who signed contracts with the union were penalized by non-union low-priced competition. Mr. Lewis began to look more and more towards organizing *all* the men in an industry together, making industrial unions instead

of craft organizations, as the solution for labor's problem. For he reasoned that if there were complete and powerful organization of all men in a given industry there could only be unfairness in competition between industries, and thus very little excuse for discrimination against collective bargaining.

It was natural that he should be attacked upon the ground that agreements with the union held the operator to an unfair competition with the non-union man, and he had received thousands of verbal blows, particularly since the signing of the Jacksonville agreement. He was getting them every day. Another voice in the multitude was that of Floyd W. Parsons, editor of the *Gas Age Record*, who told the American Gas Association convention at Atlantic City on October 13th that Mr. Lewis had caused many union mines to shut down and had brought disaster to his organization by his policies. Mr. Parsons also took time to predict a strike in the soft coal fields when their contract expired, caused by the "no retreat" attitude of the miners.

However, at the biennial convention of the union, which was held at Indianapolis, Mr. Lewis' attitude in that respect was the subject of a song, "No Backward Step."

"We'll say with John L. Lewis we'll never take a backward step," sang the delegates with enthusiasm.

The leader discussed the situation by saying, "The union miner cannot agree to the acceptance of a wage principle which will permit his annual earnings and his living standards to be determined by the hungriest unfortunates whom the non-union operators can employ."

He held little hope, he said, for rehabilitation of the soft coal industry through legislation. Stabilization and

rejuvenation must be worked out by the industry itself, he held.

"The industry is suffering not so much from an excessive number of employees as it is from the superfluous horde of incompetent and irresponsible operators whose sole justification for remaining in business is the liquidation of their mortgages and overdrawn bank accounts," he said.

His never ceasing attack upon communists was rewarded with a constitutional amendment prohibiting their membership in the union.

He clashed with John Brophy, when the insurgent leader agreed with a report of the United States Bureau of Mines which said that nearly sixty-five percent of the nations' bituminous tonnage in 1925 was mined by non-union labor.

Mr. Lewis denounced Brophy as a traitor to the union and said that fully sixty percent of both the anthracite and bituminous production of the nation had been mined by union men. Brophy's contention was clearly a veiled attack on the leadership of the union and an unspoken suggestion that he could do better. But it is not clear why Mr. Lewis allowed himself to be goaded into bucking the facts of a completely impartial, and very accurate agency.

The convention voted against a wage reduction, the usual procedure which invites prodigies of negotiation, and suggested that a contract for two years be wrested from the bituminous operators to take effect at the expiration of the existing contract on March 31st. The operators were queried and a new conference opened in Miami, Florida, on February 15th.

Despite the heat which wilted many a collar in the low-ceilinged room where the negotiations were held, Mr.

Lewis spoke for more than hour. His heavy mane of fairly reddish hair, his thundering voice, his massive figure dominated the scene as he told how the Jacksonville agreement had "never been given a chance."

But the conference adjourned in the middle of a hopeless deadlock and a strike, involving 150,000 miners in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Illinois, could be seen in the headlines of all the newspapers. Life was just one strike after another for John L. Lewis, but this one it seemed would undoubtedly be for the life of the United Mine Workers of America.

Chapter Seventeen

RESILIENCY IN THE MAN

February, 1927-January, 1932

As WAVES BUFFET a mighty ocean liner her plates bend. When the wind bears down on the Empire State building the great mass rocks, if ever so slightly. It is resiliency in these great bodies of steel which saves them from breaking.

John L. Lewis was a man of cold steel, though he knew he must give at times to avoid a crackup. He knew there never was a general in all history who followed "No Retreat" as an infallible rule and that no quarterback would be commended for calling every play a line plunge through the center.

But if the Iowa Achilles had a vulnerable heel it was his habit of relentlessly advancing, regardless of conditions in the country. A peerless negotiator, he would win battles in the conference room that would shortly be brought to naught by pact violations at the tippie.

The operators were plainly in revolt against existing standards now, suffering from a depression in the industry and from the competition of serf-mined coal. The storm signals were up, and though John L. Lewis loved a fight, he knew he had better compromise.

He decided to sign separate district agreements, hoping to set a favorable pattern first. The Central Pennsylvania operators agreed to continue the Jacksonville agreement, and thus averted a stoppage.

The Pittsburgh Coal Company, however, the largest operator in the world, had gone non-union eighteen months before and was prepared to fight the union. Mr. Lewis had nothing to say as the district leaders sought separate conferences, and the strike went into effect on March 31st.

The terms of the Jacksonville agreement were accepted temporarily as 72,000 miners went back to work in Illinois on October 1, 1927. A commission was set up, however, to determine new pay scales.

The legions of officeholders who have discovered unpleasantness in the pursuit of their duties during hard times for their electors must run in an unbroken file back to the Stone Age. Mr. Lewis was finding his leadership somewhat like playing football with pocket touch bombs. One tackle and you face ruin with a loud bang.

He charged one platform after another with the same fire, however, and breathed defiance at the operators in every public appearance. A typical example was his address before the Anthracite Cooperative Congress held at Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania. He told leaders of the employers that his union disavowed responsibility for all the strikes which had beset the industry. He warned those who believed in low wages and arbitration of pay scales not to attempt imposition of their ideas upon the miners' union.

He welcomed a chance to give expert testimony before a Senate Committee inquiry on Interstate Commerce. In Washington on March 17th he testified for more than four hours, placing much of the blame for "unemployment, pauperism, and encouragement of radicalism of the reddest sort" upon John D. Rockefeller, Jr., General W. W. Atterbury, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and the Mellon interests of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

He hammered away at the usurpation of governmental powers by coal companies, rapped the "unfairness of Federal courts in issuance of injunctions," and severely criticized unscrupulous operators who had violated the Jacksonville agreement. This contract, which had been hailed as a guarantee of tranquillity and prosperity for three years, had become nothing more than a scrap of paper, he said. Its repudiation he believed to be the core of the trouble in the bituminous fields, "throwing the industry into the worst state of demoralization it has ever known." He insisted the government itself had an important part in the making of the agreement and cited the 1924 reports of Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover as proof. President Coolidge, however, while he profoundly deplored the abrogations of the agreement, declared that the government was in no sense to be considered a party to the contract.

While Mr. Lewis was careful to see that his union continued to pay the American Federation of Labor a head tax for 400,000 members, it was a mere gesture of political necessity. For one thing, the United Miners must keep their voting strength in the Federation, and they must never admit that they were slowly crumbling as a power.

Revolt was everywhere against the name of Lewis. Outlaw strikes flourished like war-time cooties. Union locals were expelled because they had refused to disown members who joined a "save the union" movement to oust the national leader. The picture the insurgents drew of Mr. Lewis was a cross between Frankenstein in a dark movie house and Mussolini warming up with harsh things to say about radicals. Hard times were making many of the

miners believe they had an honest complaint about the direction of issues.

On August 31st the union chief took another blow: the commission studying wage scales in the Illinois fields reported that there should be a revision downward from those provided in the Jacksonville agreement. Mr. Lewis looked everything over carefully before the agreement was accepted, but he would not comment upon the trend of things.

There had been many occasions when Mr. Lewis had been prominently mentioned for the post of Secretary of Labor. Apparently he still believed that he could be named and lead beneficial social legislation, for he made appeals to the voters to elect Herbert Hoover President of the United States.

"We are in the midst of a new industrial revolution which has become the marvel of the civilized world. The astounding basis of procedure underlying this new development has been that prices should be lowered to the consumer and at the same time wages of labor should be indeterminately increased in accordance with the principle of increased productive efficiency," Mr. Lewis said in a radio address backing Mr. Hoover's candidacy. "Labor and industry require his services and genius for constructive industrial statesmanship, so that the unprecedented industrial and business prosperity which he inaugurated may be properly developed and stabilized and the way which he has opened to human and social betterment may be widened and made certain for coming generations of our people."

One wonders if he would not enjoy erasing that speech from "the record" now. Many times during January,

1929, he was prominently mentioned as a likely member of Mr. Hoover's cabinet. He was fighting Wall Street's corporate interests while voting the Republican ticket at the same time. Of course he did not get the post, but then he may have turned it down. John L. Lewis is not the kind of a man to tell others what he might have had.

At any rate he was definitely "under fire" from his own ranks, a condition under which he would never have left the union. He was engaged in battle on a hundred fronts. One of these fights was to secure a tariff on imported petroleum. As he told the United States Senate in a letter, fuel from other countries displaced twenty percent of American coal production in 1927. Saying "the coal industry is now so near to the industrial grave," he promised that interruption of this free flow of low-priced oil would help to revive coal digging and aid the domestic petroleum business. He reminded the senators that more than thirty states are affected by the coal mining industry.

In at least one of these states, Illinois, the camp fires of the union's enemies of John L. Lewis glowed brightly. Since the local leaders were ambitious for the clothes of Mr. Lewis, even though they would have to be cut down for a neat fit, the rank and file caught the spirit of revolt and anarchy reigned.

In Pennsylvania the progressive, John Brophy, saw the union slipping, thought Mr. Lewis was turning into a straw man, and sought the leadership himself. He knew some of the remedies for the situation and believed he could muddle through the rest of them to victory. Because Mr. Lewis did not believe it time to begin progressive moves, the lesser lights were impatient with him and sought to throw him out. They wanted to see unionization, for in-

stance, in West Virginia and Kentucky, where their leader knew it would take civil war to effect it. They saw their imposing chief inspiring high sounding resolutions that never seemed to mean much and they saw him losing ground as the industry lost it.

Mr. Brophy wrote the *New Republic*:

"At a time when the American Federation of Labor is preparing the field in the textile industry of the South, when it needs all its strength and undivided support of all its constituent parts, John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers, weakens the already feeble miners' organization by waging war in Illinois, the last great union district in the bituminous field. Upon one pretext or another, Mr. Lewis attempts to thrust aside the district officers and set up a provisional government in Illinois with his appointees as officers."

Brophy charged that during the three years of the Jacksonville agreement Mr. Lewis had lost 200,000 miners for the union and had injured the organization's prestige in the non-union fields. He added that no policy had been built up to meet the emergency.

It is doubtful whether or not, asked suddenly, Mr. Lewis could recall just how many people he had "suspended" from the union for one reason or another. He had been tormented by Frank Farrington, Alexander Howat, Powers Hapgood, and John Brophy for a long period and he had expelled some of them from time to time. They kept coming back.

While Mr. Farrington was not shooting any more bullets, he was molding them for Harry Fishwick, the president of the Illinois district. As soon as John L. Lewis had certain report of Mr. Fishwick's activities he suspended

him. The national leader named Frank Hefferly of Collinsville, provisional president, but the new district leader found himself locked out by the Fishwick camp when he sought to take over the Springfield, Illinois, office. So he set up headquarters in a hotel. Mr. Fishwick leaped into court before the ink was dry on Hefferly's registration card at the local inn, and emerged triumphantly with an injunction restraining the provisional group from having a duplicate set of office keys made.

"To have permitted John L. Lewis and his underlings to take possession of the Illinois Miners' Union would have endangered the modified wage agreement which he fought bitterly, would have plunged merchants in mining towns into bankruptcy, and in short," said Mr. Fishwick in a great many words, "would have made Illinois a black spot on the map of American industry."

Believing themselves chained to a man who had plunged into the quicksands of despair, other petty chiefs brought out hacksaws, not knowing that John L. Lewis was making plans to build a more solid foundation for labor as a whole. At the American Federation of Labor convention in Toronto, Canada, he expressed the belief that his Illinois house cleaning would turn out all right.

Shortly afterwards the international union, in an answer to the injunction obtained by the insurgents, charged the state officers with insubordination and accused Fishwick of using \$28,202.10 of the union funds illegally. The official answered that the checks had been stolen from the Springfield office on September 4th. Mr. Lewis quoted from the union constitution to show that Fishwick had acted without supervision from the executive offices, but the injunction was upheld.

By now the movement to depose the national standard bearer was in full force. John H. Walker, president of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, Alexander Howat, the battle-scarred Kansan, John Brophy of Pennsylvania, a few Ohio union officials, and many others came into the open and called a convention of malcontents for Springfield, Illinois, beginning March 10, 1930.

"The history of the United Mine Workers of America under the regime of John L. Lewis has been an unbroken series of defeats. The regime has thrown hundreds of thousands of our members and their families into the depths of poverty and destitution," said a committee report of the men-who-would-be leaders. "Election stealing, convention packing and slugging of delegates have reduced the old-time democracy of the union to a ghastly farce."

The American Federation of Labor assumed a stern attitude and announced it would revoke the charter of the Illinois Federation unless that group joined the United Mine Workers in fighting the insurgents. The Executive Board charged Mr. Walker, head of the Federation, with helping to organize the rump miners' convention.

Meanwhile plans went on for the meeting of the malcontents in Springfield on March 10th and on the same date Mr. Lewis called a convention to meet in Indianapolis and read the Illinois rebels out of the union.

Parliamentary rules were given only casual attention at the Springfield meeting, where 500 delegates from eleven Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Ohio and Pennsylvania districts gathered. The spirit of Oscar Ameringer, whose writings in the Oklahoma *Leader* and the Illinois *Miner* had brought him fame as "Adam

Coaldigger" and stirred the workers to open rebellion, hovered over the gathering.

Though they resented "the dictatorship of Mr. Lewis," and told stories of "his arrogance, high-handedness and neglect of unorganized labor," every other man sought to be named director with dictatorial powers.

The delegates drove President Fishwick of the Illinois district from his chair immediately after he opened the convention. By acclamation they chose Alexander Howat to take his place. And the rank and file had its say. Of course the chief target was the "All-High," John L. Lewis.

Innumerable papers were read but they could all be summed up in the lines of one of them: "John L. Lewis killed more than the United Mine Workers of America, he killed more than the leaders of our union, he killed its very soul." And so the leader's post was declared vacant, a new constitution adopted and permanent officers elected. Alexander Howat was elected president, Jack Walker was named secretary of the treasury, and resolutions scoring the organizers of the "old" union and its international board members, said to be "guilty of extravagance, corruption and indifference to the needs of the workers," were passed. The charge was made that the union's organizers did political work for John L. Lewis.

In Indianapolis the 1,000 delegates to the regular organization convention heard Mr. Lewis say: "Your will and your mandates will triumph in Illinois. Over in Springfield there is a little band of malcontents, representing the offscourings of this organization. It is a ragtail and bobtail element gathered there muttering in their beards."

He refused, however, to discuss possible expulsion of the Springfield insurgents, saying the matter would be taken up by the delegates at the regular convention. On March 17th, William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, addressed the delegates after turning down a similar invitation to speak at the rump convention. He announced that the Federation would recognize only the original union.

At the Springfield convention Mr. Lewis was referred to as "ex-president," and "the Mussolini of the international union, the man responsible for the crushing defeat of the miners in many strikes."

On March 22nd, Mr. Lewis summoned Alexander Howat to appear before the Executive Board of the union and show cause why he, John Brophy, and other leaders of the rebellion should not be expelled.

Mr. Howat, cloaked in his new authority, ignored the order but in a few days imitated it. He set a new high in impudence when he ordered Mr. Lewis to appear before the insurgents' executive board to answer charges of having fostered a dual union. Naturally, Mr. Lewis was silent in several languages.

He took action. Revoking the charter of the Kansas miners, he appointed provisional officers to take charge of the district.

When Howat, Brophy and the others failed to appear they were expelled from the United Mine Workers of America on the charge of dual unionism.

"King of labor racketeers," was the epithet hurled at Mr. Lewis by Oscar Ameringer at a summer convention of the League for Industrial Democracy in Forest Park, Pennsylvania. The writer said, "delusions of grandeur on

the part of the miners' leader has brought more woe to the mining towns of Illinois than the Germans inflicted on Belgium."

While the soft coal fields were slowly crumbling to dust a series of conferences extending over three weeks resulted in substantial gains for the hard coal miners and an additional five-and-one-half-year peace pact was signed in New York City. The miners at last won a modified checkoff system of dues payment. The agreement was that if the individual miner gave the company permission his dues could be remitted directly to the union. The new long-term pact maintained the existing wage scales.

The leader praised the anthracite industry for maintaining wages as he addressed an Anthracite Club dinner in New York. He denounced the practice of cutting wages in order to revive trade and said "this wholesale effort to cheapen products by cheapening men has thrown the nation into reverse gear from the movement by which it attained its greatest prosperity."

Despite his undelineated position in Illinois, where he had twice been cited for contempt of the injunction obtained by the insurgent group, the fighting president of the United Mine Workers of America was re-elected for a two-year term.

The Illinois Circuit Court soon ruled that Mr. Lewis headed the only recognized American Miners Union, but made permanent the injunction denying the original organization the right to interfere in affairs of the Illinois miners. Mr. Fishwick immediately announced that his faction would renounce all legal proceedings against the United Mine Workers of America and he called upon the original organization to join in a movement "ending all warfare."

Even with peace among the union men Mr. Lewis knew that conditions in the bituminous mines were horrible. Once more he returned to agitating for government regulation of the industry. He had submitted a coal stabilization bill, known as the Watson Bill, which was introduced by Senator Watson of Indiana in 1930. But the depression had kept it from consideration.

Seeking a basic understanding between the bituminous operators and the miners to end incessant strikes, Mr. Lewis wired President Hoover, requesting his aid in bringing about a conference. He described the condition of the diggers as approximating the degradation of serf labor. The nation's Chief Executive, whose fishing propensities were badly cramped by a nation-wide depression, took some time to answer but finally announced he had referred the matter to Secretary of Labor William N. Doak. The Secretary suggested such a meeting but the operators frowned upon it.

Mere frowns were nothing to the reception Mr. Lewis met when he addressed a West Frankfort, Illinois, strike meeting shortly afterwards. Newspapers of the time reported that he stood for more than an hour, gavel in hand, rapping for order, while boos, hisses, catcalls filled the air. It was a rare example of intestinal fortitude. Simply because other speakers were anxious to make their speeches, Mr. Lewis finally yielded the stand. Had there been no other consideration than his personal feelings, the president of the United Mine Workers of America might have stood there rapping his gavel and being rapped throughout a long night or until he finally secured order. The man had no nerves and could always be relied upon to sway an audience.

He fared better at Des Moines, Iowa, in a Labor Day

address. There he called upon industry to provide efficient enterprise "for the success of all our population."

"If business leaders fail in the task," he warned, "the people will undertake the performance on their own responsibility by exercising their voting strength in devising and enlarging the regulatory powers of their Federal and State governments.

"Mass production will not be permitted to permanently level the masses to want and poverty, if the American workingmen unite against such a pitfall. There can be no permanent progress or prosperity until the economic axis of capitalism revolves on a sound basis of an equitable distribution of profits. And what is more, profits as a whole must be large enough to enable all human factors engaged in each single industry to share the profit gains in sufficient amount to maintain relative purchasing power."

It was an indication of his trend of thought, now directed towards the sort of legislative social planning which was eventually enacted in the National Industrial Recovery Act. The second act in Mr. Lewis' attempt to secure national regulation of the coal industry occurred shortly thereafter when in January, 1932, the Watson Bill, completely revised, was introduced in the Senate by James Davis and in the House of Representatives by Clyde Kelley.

The bill guaranteed labor the right to organize, differentiating between real and company unions, and a provision made it mandatory on the part of the government to license and impose minimal conditions on interstate coal corporations, a social, but quite legal provision. It is almost superfluous to add that the disastrous Hoover regime could not permit of its passage.

That some sort of aid from the Federal government was sorely needed was dramatically shown when the labor leader tried to secure a \$50,000,000.00 appropriation from Congress for relief among the miners. At the same time he criticized the Red Cross, charging that the organization had failed to provide relief in famine-stricken areas where miners and their families, next door to the richest coal fields in the world, stole their fuel or did without.

Chapter Eighteen

REGAINING POWER WITH N.I.R.A.

September, 1932–October, 1935

CIRCUMSTANCES AND his gift of realism finally brought John L. Lewis to the belief that what was wrong with coal was wrong with all industry: it needed government regulation.

He realized that stabilization could not be accomplished by industry voluntarily because monopolistic price-fixing would result. With that decision came the realization that craft unionism, the organization of laborers along strict occupational lines, was outmoded, for without a powerful movement to back government regulation of industry the whole project would break of its own weight.

It was a big order, but if successful, would result in a new order. John L. Lewis resolved to be labor's David, battling against avaricious Capital, mightiest portrayer of the role of Goliath. His slingshot was powerful collectivism and sound economic reasoning. But Mr. Lewis did not then, and does not now wish to slay Capital. He wanted to stun the giant and tape his hands to such dimensions they could not be used to delve in a filching way into the pocket of labor, bent over in the performance of the nation's work.

The threefold aims of the organized-labor movement were expounded by Mr. Lewis in a radio speech on Sep-

tember 11, 1932. Prosperity, he said, must be bought back with a shorter working day and week, the creation of a national economic council, and the enactment of a national industrial code.

"Labor protests against further over-expansion of production facilities and asserts its opposition to employees being forced to carry the burden of fixed charges on the unnecessary investment involved in over-expanded industrial plants," he said. "Labor seeks definitely to eliminate the manufacturer whose sole ability to remain in business is geared to pauperize wage rates and cutthroat sales prices."

On January 31, 1933, Mr. Lewis was re-elected head of the union. With his new mandate he plunged into repainting the industrial scene.

On February 17th he appeared before the Senate Committee on Finance and advocated a practice of industrial stabilization for our entire productive mechanism. He suggested that the Sherman Anti-Trust Law be suspended but he also pleaded for ironclad guarantees to labor.

It was at this point that the happy political family of smiling Franklin Delano Roosevelt swept into Washington. Soon after the President assumed office he asked Professor Raymond Moley to get responsible spokesmen of labor, financing and industry together for the purpose of developing recovery legislation. Salient features of John L. Lewis' recommendations before the Senate Committee of Finance were adopted as the National Industrial Recovery Act emerged. The licensing feature which Mr. Lewis advocated in the Davis-Kelley Bill, for instance, became a congeries of fair competition codes.

Certain principles developed by Mr. Lewis with the

aid of W. Jett Lauck, his economic adviser and statistician, became the famous section 7A, which guaranteed labor the right to bargain collectively through representatives of its own choosing.

On March 27th President Roosevelt studied the coal problem and conferred with Mr. Lewis and other union representatives but there was no announcement of decisions. Newspapers, lacking other material, recalled the Charleston campaign speech in which cutthroat competition was denounced. All these things served to array in the public mind a series of facts showing that John L. Lewis and his philosophies were going to be given a trial.

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins called hearings in April to develop the National Industrial Recovery Act idea. On June 16th the President's signature made the National Industrial Recovery Act operative.

Before other American Federation of Labor leaders grasped the possibilities of the Blue Eagle, while they as a matter of fact were still trying to unravel the phraseology of the National Industrial Recovery Act, Mr. Lewis' organizers were driving cars and trucks through dingy villages and beating drums in the mine fields. The United Mine Workers of America were down to \$75,000.00 in their treasury, a pool which had once held millions. Mr. Lewis staked the entire sum in a gamble to recapture his lost membership and won. He plastered mine tipples with signs. Red fires flared through the night and orators shouted, "the law is on our side." Even West Virginia and Kentucky were invaded. Within two months the United Mine Workers of America was greater than ever before. Half a million miners, some from the so-called captive mines, which supplied the steel industry

directly and were owned by the United States Steel Corporation. He pushed and fought and called a series of brilliantly executed strikes. Again he won. He had doubled the organization's membership and organized ninety-eight percent of the coal industry effectively. It was a brilliant stroke. He had called his turn, acted with boldness, speed and precision, his characteristic qualities.

Mr. Lewis, William Green, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and George L. Berry of the Printing Pressmen were appointed as labor members of the Recovery Administration. The old-line craft unions, however, were left at the post like a horse and buggy in the Indianapolis races, from the moment the National Industrial Recovery Act started. Jurisdictional disputes were common and it seemed that the heads of the Federation were most worried by the possibility that some workers would be led into industrial unionism. Mr. Green actually sabotaged organizing efforts, telling the field workers to slow down. Of course, in such confusion it became impossible for labor, even though it had the law on its side, to halt the great industrialists who insisted that section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act permitted the organization of company unions.

When he felt the first shock of the big guns of capital hammering away at the new citadel of labor, the National Industrial Recovery Act, John L. Lewis determined that craft separatism must go. He knew that government regulation could not really stabilize industry without a monolithic labor movement.

Meanwhile the word had spread through the mine areas that he and the President were buddies. The miners

would hold up two closely placed fingers and tell each other, "They are just like that!"

When the code hearings began the union chief was able to confront the operators with something they thought was as dead as the dodo: the threat of a general strike in the industry.

"The handwriting is on the wall," Mr. Lewis told them. "Eighteen million stomachs clash against backbones."

He forced the miners' pay from less than \$3.00 a day to more than \$5.00.

He reported to General Hugh S. Johnson, administrator of the National Industrial Recovery Act, his great strides in organizing the miners. He mentioned one union meeting held in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, the first in ten years in that community, which was attended by 50,000 men. At a Williamson, West Virginia, rally 4,200 miners joined the union within the space of an hour, the leader said.

"Now that the industrial recovery law has again given them the unquestioned right to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing for wages and working conditions, miners are joining the United Mine Workers of America by the tens of thousands," Mr. Lewis announced.

He moved his office to Washington, and the Capital, which had seen colorful personalities come and go, watched this new showman with growing interest and wonder. They noticed that he had the speech of a Huey Long or a Hugh Johnson, the stage presence of a Shakespearean actor, and the imposing physique of a heavyweight champion of the world.

Then there were incidents galore to add to the Lewis build-up. There was the time, for instance, when former Secretary of War Patrick Hurley came to a coal hearing to argue on behalf of employers. During his discourse he mentioned pridefully that he had once been a member of the United Mine Workers himself.

"It is a source of pride," said Mr. Lewis, "to see a member of the United Mine Workers go out into politics and make a noted name for himself. But it is a matter of profound sorrow to see a man who has made such a name betray the union of his youth for thirty lousy pieces of silver."

Mr. Hurley sprang towards the burly mine chief, protesting with a great show of anger.

"Very well," said Mr. Lewis, turning to the stenographer, "strike out 'lousy'."

Another evening in Washington, he appeared before an audience of employers and government workers who knew him to a man. Wearing the scowl that characterizes him as definitely as a smile characterizes Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he advanced to the center of the stage.

"The name is Lewis," he boomed. "John L."

That was one way of starting to bring a smile to the faces of the audience. It was this sort of thing, and the dramatic pauses which he affected in all of his speeches, that caused some of his enemies to call him a ham Shakespearean actor. At an American Federation of Labor meeting there once was a call for the miners' chief.

"He's in the barber shop," someone shouted. "You don't think he could work without his makeup, do you?"

General Hugh S. Johnson, who is one of his closest friends, recalls several stories about Mr. Lewis. In one

of the more hectic coal hearings everyone had fallen asleep but the two colorful cronies. They were talking about nearly everything known to mankind, and the general, who talks a very fine military battle, was illustrating a point by describing one of Napoleon's battles in Russia. He drew a little map on the wall, showing where the Corsican strategist placed the infantry, the cavalry and the artillery.

"Then," said General Johnson, "he placed his reserves back here on the right."

"Pardon me, General," interrupted Mr. Lewis, "but he put the reserves back on the left."

And he proved the point, illustrating the wide range of his knowledge.

Once when the General was convalescing from an operation he was visited in the hospital by Mr. Lewis, who sat down on the edge of the bed without a word. Serious matters which might involve the fate of millions of workers were in a state of flux at the moment.

"What's the matter, John?" asked the general.

"Well, sometimes I think I take myself too seriously," the big man replied.

Man to man he could drop his poses. On the platform he used them very effectively. His deep-set eyes, so calm and cold when he was at ease, glared and rolled with startling effectiveness when he was in action upon the platform. Beneath his heavy smudge of red eyebrows the large, deeply lined face glowed palely when he was crossed. He lighted up like Broadway at eight p.m.

There were many such occasions. One of them was the violent argument he had with Daniel J. Tobin, president of the Brotherhood of Teamsters, during the American

Federation of Labor convention which began in Washington, October 11, 1933. Mr. Lewis advocated an enlarged executive council to democratize the Federation.

Mr. Tobin, in fighting the proposal, intimated that if it were adopted, Mr. Lewis could read President Green out of the convention by refusing to stand by him as a member of the council.

"That sort of talk is the muttering of a man who knows not of that which he speaks," growled the giant leader. "I hurl those statements back in your teeth, Dan Tobin."

Mr. Green, who was once a minister, tapped nervously with his gavel and grinned timidly as he remarked about the goings-on "of these two young boys."

"The miners' union has loyally supported the presidency of Mr. Green and will do so again," said Mr. Lewis. But his resolution was defeated.

The insurgents of the Middle West, who had gone through a stage where they called themselves the United Mine Workers of America and Illinois, finally decided they would like to come back to the parent organization in the early months of 1934. Their petition was favorably considered and a battle which had lasted two years was over. John L. Lewis had won another victory.

The administration of National Industrial Recovery Act was coasting, and Mr. Lewis knew it. The promise that there would be cracking down on the heads of the reactionaries never came to pass; successful rugged individualists were allowed to flout the law of the land, notable among them being Henry Ford, who built automobiles. The labor leader feared no one; he read a paper before the American Academy of Political and Social Science in which he accused the National Industrial Recovery Act

officials of adopting temporizing measures and demanded that they quit stalling and produce the thirty-hour week.

When, on January 23rd, the biennial convention of the United Mine Workers of America took place at Indianapolis, there were 1,700 delegates, as contrasted with the 200 which had gathered there two years before. Mr. Lewis listened to a debate on men and machines carried on by a dozen seamed-faced miners. Those against the new order complained that mechanization at the mines had cast hundreds of diggers out of work and placed their families in the bread lines. Their stories were packed with the pathos of real life. In equally dramatic fashion Mr. Lewis called upon the miners to accept machinery, since they could not turn back the clock, but to demand a fair share of the benefits of mechanization in the form of shorter hours and increased compensation. He said that machines must be made the workingman's ally, and that nothing was to be gained by fighting them.

"The two elements of the coal industry, labor and operators, must get together to lead the industry out of its present chaos in which operators as well as miners have suffered. There is more rational relationship between elements of the coal industry now than ever before," he said. "The United Mine Workers has done more than any other element to achieve that goal. The licensing of corporations, the neutralizing of the Sherman Law and collective bargaining to safeguard the rights of labor, established by the National Industrial Recovery Act, have been advocated by the union since 1928 as principal remedies for the ills in the industry."

Mr. Lewis was named a member of an American Delegation to the International Labor Conference at Geneva,

Switzerland, and upon his return reported that many of the other delegates, particularly those from dictator-ruled states, no longer represented labor and industry. Speaking before the San Francisco Commonwealth Club he pleaded for unity of capital and labor, saying that a full partnership alone could save our economic system.

"In all these countries democracy as we know it and love it is dead, and the movement of countries of that character is still growing," he said. "All of us are fully aware that this trend hangs over our own country."

The principles of the National Industrial Recovery Act, in his belief, pointed a middle way for avoiding extremist policies such as fascism and communism. He added that the Recovery Act could remedy the worst evils of cutthroat competition, too.

But as he had so often pointed out, the full cooperation of labor, which had been contemplated under the National Industrial Recovery Act, had as yet not been realized. Modifications would have to be made, he said, and he reiterated that automobile manufacturers were intimidating men into joining company unions, thus flouting labor guarantees, which were a law of the land.

On October 12, 1932, when one of the most momentous of American Federation of Labor conventions opened in San Francisco, the Federation approved the charter for industrial unionism and Mr. Lewis won his fight to enlarge the executive council of the Federation. As Mr. Green was re-elected to the Presidency, John L. Lewis was named one of the seven vice-presidents.

The inauguration of vertical unionism and the decision to enlarge the Federation's Executive Council saw the start of a new era in organized labor.

The way was now open for the Federation to take in hundreds of local unions and weld them into large, cohesive organizations. There had been a movement, also, toward closer cooperation with the government to carry out the promise of a partnership between labor and industry with Federal supervision. It was apparent that the convention was in no mood to abandon the swing of labor towards governmental support, for the delegates refused to adopt a resolution calling for withdrawal of union officials from National Industrial Recovery Act posts. The trend was definitely towards quasi-public or governmental form of unionism. It was not long thereafter, however, that a rift developed between organized labor and the Roosevelt Administration.

Testifying before a sub-committee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. Lewis called Donald R. Richberg, Director of the National Emergency Council, a traitor to organized labor, saying the official had been responsible for a renewal of the automobile code which continued the forty-eight-hour week. Mr. Lewis said angrily that the National Industrial Recovery Act had yielded to the pressure of big business.

In a reply, Mr. Richberg said the indignation of labor was unimportant. This inflamed Mr. Lewis, who said:

"In tearing the mask of hypocrisy from Mr. Richberg labor is not attacking President Roosevelt. It is merely revealing to the President the unworthy liaison of a trusted servant."

The Executive Board of the American Federation of Labor backed Mr. Lewis and when Mr. Richberg called a special meeting of the advisory board of the National Industrial Recovery Act it was turned into a field day

of criticism. Leading the attack was John L. Lewis, who said Richberg had created a muddle in public thinking.

A few days later he told the Senate Committee on Education and Labor that Mr. Richberg had confessed to the advisory board on March 15th that he had written President Roosevelt's executive order concerning majority rule in collective bargaining but that three days later he interpreted the order in such a way as to nullify the principle. Mr. Richberg's silence was impressive.

A more serious break between the government and the leaders of labor was averted, however, when the workers were given equal membership on the National Industrial Recovery Act's governing body. And once again Mr. Lewis smiled upon Mr. Richberg. The miners' chief and the former labor lawyer whom a few days ago he had excoriated made up when they met in an anteroom of the White House.

A split within the Federation of Labor was coming, and while the leaders tried to maintain unity with a gigantic rally at Madison Square Garden, in New York City, the cleavage was only delayed. A common enemy will often bring warring factions back to a united front, and the United States Chamber of Commerce and former President Hoover came in for a verbal assault.

Speakers called attention to the fact that the large business interests meant to kill the National Industrial Recovery Act and undermine the New Deal, which, while not unduly friendly to labor, had at least tried to give the workingman a slightly better share of the proceeds of his toil. Laws which would put teeth into existing legislation designed as a boon to labor were advocated, as was an extension of the Recovery Act.

Mr. Green threatened a strike if legislation favorable to labor was not granted the unions, a militant remark he promptly forgot when real disaster occurred, the invalidation of the National Industrial Recovery Act by the Supreme Court of the United States on May 27, 1935.

"We are living in a state of continuous crisis," snorted Mr. Lewis, "under the negative autocracy of five former corporation lawyers on the Supreme Court bench. Only industrial democracy can save America from a condition of permanent social and economic disequilibrium."

Having lost all ground with the failure of the Recovery Act, the bituminous coal industry was badly in need of stabilization. The union officers called a strike of 400,000 men, to be effective at midnight on June 16th, unless new contracts were signed. The stoppage was postponed, however, and the threatening situation cleared when on August 25th the Guffey-Snyder Bill for control of the bituminous coal industry was passed. This law, which was known as the "National Industrial Recovery Act" of America's coal business, was jubilantly received by both miners and operators. Mr. Lewis said it was the "most hopeful achievement in connection with this struggle which has been going on for years." James Walter Carter, president of the Carter Coal Company, began suit almost immediately to test the constitutionality of the new law.

As the American Federation of Labor delegates met in Atlantic City on October 12, 1935, industrial unionism was defeated by the old guard craft unionists, although Mr. Lewis pleaded for an hour and a half. He pointed to a record of twenty-five years of constant and unbroken effort of the Federation to organize the mass production

industries and said that the crafts in control of the executive council, by exercising their paper jurisdiction, were fighting against labor's united campaign.

"They flit from flower to flower while they sip the honey in industry," shouted Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Green was re-elected president of the Federation. In his acceptance speech he rebuked Mr. Lewis, who had placed him in nomination, for criticism of the Federation's inefficiency in organizing the bulk of America's laborers.

During a debate on the request of the rubber workers' union for an industrial charter, rather than the modified charter presented them in August, William Hutcheson, president of the United Brotherhood Carpenters and Joiners of America, interrupted to say the industrial union question had been disposed of and any speech in favor of it was out of order.

Mr. Lewis rose to say that the general principle had been disposed of but that specific resolutions asking for such charters were still before the convention. Mr. Hutcheson's objection, raised as a point of order, was characterized by Mr. Lewis as "small potatoes." He said the move was an attempt to keep delegates from the small unions off the floor.

The carpenters' chief stood up, exposing his massive frame of six feet and three inches and spread his full weight of nearly three hundred pounds around, then answered that he had been raised on small potatoes, and "that is why I am so small." He made another pointed remark about Mr. Lewis' dramatic manners.

Mr. Lewis walked over towards Mr. Hutcheson and with heads bent low the two men conversed in under-

tones. Delegates nearby recalled later that they heard Mr. Hutcheson call Mr. Lewis an insulting name. The pair resembled embattled bulls ready to lock horns.

Mr. Lewis, fully as broad as Mr. Hutcheson, but not quite as tall, crashed his right fist into the carpenter's jaw. Carrying a table with them, both men went down fighting and the convention hall was in an uproar. President William Green pounded his gavel for order but the two heads of the largest and most powerful unions in the Federation were pummeling each other.

When the delegates finally pried them apart, Mr. Hutcheson's face was covered with blood from a cut and his lip was swollen. The miners' leader merely adjusted a torn shirt and collar, smoothed his ruffled hair and walked away. In the memory of the oldest delegates such a scene had never occurred in any of the conventions since the inception of the Federation fifty-five years before.

Mr. Hutcheson's point of order was supported after a debate but the next resolution contained a similar request from automobile workers for an industrial union charter. The movement for vertical organization would not down.

Within a few hours Mr. Lewis received a telegram from a union carpenter in Kansas City and announced that it read: "Congratulations, sock him again."

The history of the American labor movement, since the first carpenter's union was formed in 1791, has been written in terms of craft unionization. But as mass production developed, the conveyor belt and machine methods supplanted individual craftsmanship. Unskilled masses of industrial workers arose and pressure grew to unionize them as units, one for each industry.

In 1871 the Knights of Labor held to the one big union

idea, but lost because of internal political differences when Samuel Gompers led insurgent craft unionists into the American Federation of Labor. The crafts have retained control of the Federation ever since. Those holding this philosophy sought anew to preserve their treasuries, maintain security of their employment and continue the regime of high-salaried union officers. That, briefly, is the history of the problem which faced Mr. Lewis.

The craft unionists were interested in a hand-to-mouth strategy. They believed only in immediate tactics. They wanted union recognition, increased wages, shorter hours, and better conditions for workmen. But more than this they sought to maintain the system whereby well-paid laborers could keep their officials in the manner to which they had become accustomed. Such a setup obviated any necessity for leadership in social legislation. On the other hand Mr. Lewis maintained that the industrial union would be a trust of all the workers in each industry, which could protect their human rights and guide them in their daily struggles infinitely more effectively than the craft union.

Chapter Nineteen

CUFFING THE OLD GUARD

October, 1935-May, 1936

IN THE PRISTINE QUIET of a little colonial house in old Alexandria, down the Potomac from Washington, Mr. Lewis planned his battle.

As the first move to place craft unionism in the ashcan of history, he sat down and penned a "Dear Sir and Brother" resignation of his vice-presidency in the American Federation of Labor and mailed it to Mr. Green. The action was both "surprising and disappointing" to the Federation head. A few days later Mr. Lewis formed the Committee for Industrial Organization and sent out letters to union heads seeking their support.

Mr. Green became as excited as a mother hen who has lost her brood during a summer rain. He warned of cleavage and disruption in labor ranks. The Typographical Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the International Ladies Garment Union, the United Textile Workers of America, the Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers of America, the United Hatter, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, soon allied themselves on the side of vertical unionization. Others were to come.

Mr. Green saw all the old things held dear to him in jeopardy and made frantic appeals to Mr. Lewis to stop.

The reply of Mr. Lewis was an offer for the president of the American Federation of Labor to head the Committee for Industrial Organization.

"Your official burdens are great. I would not increase them," wrote Mr. Lewis. "I do not covet your office, in proof, I submit the record of years of support of your personal and official fortunes. It is bruited about, however, that your private sympathies and individual inclinations lie with the group espousing the industrial type of organization, while your official actions and public utterances will be in support of their adversaries.

"Such a policy is vulnerable to criticism and will hardly suffice to protect you against attacks that may ensue from advocates of the craft philosophy. They may feel rightfully that more is due them than prefunctory support.

"Why not return to your father's house? You will be welcome. If you care to dissociate yourself from your present position, the Committee for Industrial Organization will be happy to make you its Chairman in my stead.

"The honorarium will be equal to that you now receive. The position would be as permanent as the one you occupy. You would have the satisfaction of supporting a cause which you believe in inherently, and of contributing your fine abilities to the achievement of an enlarged opportunity for the nation's workers."

As he searched the field for a capable director of industrial unionization, Mr. Lewis could think of none better qualified than the progressive John Brophy, his former bitter enemy. Mr. Brophy was fearless, intelligent, energetic and, with the passing of the years, more tactful. In fairness to him it must be said Mr. Brophy went to John

L. Lewis, admitted that the miners' chief had shown better timing in advocating industrial unionization, swallowed his pride, and volunteered for duty.

"All right," said Mr. Lewis, "you be the director of the Committee for Industrial Organization." And he made no conditions, demonstrating his profound ability for leadership. Mr. Brophy promptly dug up excerpts from the *American Labor Year Book* for 1917-18 in which Mr. Green capably had set forth the brief for vertical unionization.

In part Mr. Green said:

"The organization of men by industry rather than by crafts brings about a more perfect organization, closer cooperation, and tends to develop the highest form of organization. The causes of jurisdictional disputes are considerably decreased and in many industries can be eliminated altogether.

"The constant friction resulting among craft organizations in their contention for jurisdiction causes the labor movement more trouble and greater inconvenience than any other problem with which it has to deal. When men are organized by industry they can concentrate their economic power more advantageously than when organized into craft unions.

"The results of such concentration of economic strength are the promotion of their common welfare and the advancement of their common interests.

"The advantage of such a form of organization is so obvious that one can scarcely conceive of any opposition thereto. A form of organization that protects the interests of the unskilled worker is the form of organization most desirable.

"Much complaint has been directed against craft organizations because little regard has been given to the problems of the unskilled workers. It is becoming more and more evident that if unskilled workers are forced to work long hours and for low wages, the interests and welfare of the skilled worker are constantly menaced thereby.

"In the development of industry and organization the tendency is toward concentration and perfection. This applies to the organization of labor as well as to the organization of industry and capital. Hence the reason why organized labor is gradually passing from craft organization to the more effective industrial forms of organization.

"Summing up the situation, some of the advantages resulting from an industrial form of organization are the reduction of opportunities or causes for jurisdictional disputes, the concentration of economic strength, the blending into harmonious cooperation of all men employed in industry, and the advancement and protection of the interests of the unskilled laborer in the same proportion as that of the skilled worker."

But now Mr. Green said:

"Experience has shown that organizations thus formed are productive of confusion and fraught with serious consequences. A line of cleavage between such a movement and the parent body may be created and the breach between those who sincerely and honestly believe in different forms of organization could be definitely widened. Bitterness and strife would inevitably follow.

"It has been the fixed rule, both within the American Federation of Labor and national and international unions

affiliated with it, to decide upon organization policies by a majority vote at legally convened conventions.

"When a decision has thus been rendered it becomes the duty of the officers and members of the American Federation of Labor to comply with it and they should be permitted to do this free from the interference and opposition of those who constitute the minority.

"I deem it my official duty, as President of the American Federation of Labor, to express my feelings of apprehension over the grave consequences which might follow from the formation of an organization within the American Federation of Labor, even though it might be claimed that said organization is formed for the achievement of a laudable purpose.

"My conscience and my judgment lead me to advise against it and emphasize most vigorously the danger of division and discord which may follow."

Mr. Brophy said:

"Some of the craft union leaders, who themselves have far from a notable record of growth, have taken wild alarm at the formation of this Committee. They are using the old trick of shouting 'splitters' and 'dualism' instead of squarely facing the issue: how can the unorganized be brought into the American Federation of Labor? Even President Green of the American Federation of Labor has permitted himself to be drawn into this misleading attack.

"His letter to the heads of the international unions who make up the Committee for Industrial Organization is remarkable because it completely ignores the main problem of increasing labor's strength.

"Mr. Green's stand is all the more remarkable because

many of the workers in auto, rubber, and other industries learned their lesson in industrial unionism from him when he was active in the United Mine Workers.

"It is puzzling to them, and no doubt embarrassing to Mr. Green, when he now shakes his head at the very words they used to hear from his lips.

"He argues for industrial unionism in the railroad, printing and other industries where councils and federated bodies exist; the Committee for Industrial Organization is not attempting to bring about change in such industries where the craft unions are already established.

"Mr. Green has tried more recently in another way to avoid the issue by making it seem that the American Federation of Labor is, under its present policy, organizing the unorganized. He issued a press statement, quoted in the American Federation of Labor Weekly News Service, saying that 'during the past two years the American Federation of Labor has created 1,804 Federal labor unions.' He is seemingly talking of a different period than that covered by the Executive Council Reports for 1934 and 1935.

"These reports give a total of 416 charters issued to Federal labor unions during the two years, with 1,196 more to local trade unions. The Executive Council Reports show that while there was a net gain in the Federal labor union of 342 in the 1933-34 period, there was a net loss of 110 in 1934-35, through disbanding or suspension.

"The local trade unions suffered a similar net loss of 204. A loss of one-quarter to one-third of the gains of the year before, which these locals suffered, is hardly something with which to be content. As these figures

show, there was a reversal of policy and trend in 1934, and it is the situation thus created that made the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization essential.

"If any one doubts the seriousness of the problem facing these new unions in the mass production industries, let them read the proceedings of the last day of the American Federation of Labor convention. Every delegate who spoke for the new unions in these industries told the same story of the demand of the workers for industrial unionism, and of difficulties resulting from the objections of the craft unions.

"This same story is repeated daily in the hundreds of letters that pour into the office of the Committee for Industrial Organization. We have received official resolutions on the matter from many steel locals affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in five different states, from a large part of the membership of the United Auto Workers, American Federation of Labor affiliate, and from many locals in rubber, gas and coke, cement, aluminum, electrical manufacturing, radio, and other industries in all parts of the country. Many central labor bodies have likewise endorsed our stand.

"The workers in the mass production industries want unionism—but they do not want to be divided up into dozens of crafts. The convention of the American Federation of Labor instructed the Executive Council to proceed with organizing campaigns in steel, autos, and other industries.

"Past experience shows that these industries cannot be organized successfully on a craft union basis. But we believe that it can be done on the basis of industrial union-

ism, the kind of organization the workers want. The Executive Council will have the whole-hearted cooperation of the Committee for Industrial Organization in such endeavors.

"Now that the cries of dualism are being hurled, it may be well to examine this oft-used term of opprobrium. Dualism involves attempting to break up and replace an existing organization, and is accompanied by efforts to take away members. There is no resemblance between this and what the Committee for Industrial Organization is doing. Our aim is to strengthen, not to break up, the American Federation of Labor.

"We are seeking to bring in outside groups, not to take away members. Nor do we wish to harm the legitimate aims of a single craft union. Our objection is to paper jurisdictional claims among hitherto unorganized workers, with the resulting confusion and division."

As Mr. Green refused the offer of leadership, Mr. Lewis as chairman of the Committee of Industrial Organization began a drive to unionize the workers in the automotive industry. Speaking at Cleveland, Ohio, under the auspices of the Cleveland Auto Council he said, "no industrial group in America with the possible exception of the steel interests, has been and is more autocratically reactionary and anti-social than those banking, financial interests which today control the automotive interests and its policies." He said that the Henry Ford system was one hundred percent autocratic, supplemented by a smug paternalism.

Meanwhile the United Mine Workers of America backed Mr. Lewis almost unanimously. Affirming their faith in industrial unionism as the hope of the labor

movement, they authorized withdrawal from the American Federation of Labor if and when circumstances made the step desirable.

In an attempt to change this angry, menacing attitude, William Green appeared before the miners' convention at Washington, and in a voice that dripped and broke with inner tears, pleaded for unity. He painted a picture of the Federation as a loving parent and its component unions as children. Then he told what usually happens to straying offspring. His oration was fused with an emotional appeal but it fell on deaf ears.

Throughout it all Mr. Lewis sat as though posing for an old-time photograph. With leonine head thrust forward he stared with eyes hard and unwinking.

At the end he rose and with unruffled complacency and a great deal of courtesy, put the proposals Mr. Green had made before the assemblage one by one. He asked if any delegate had been persuaded to change his attitude. With a series of shouts they shook the building, rejecting Mr. Green. Then with a tone as sharp as a surgeon's knife the president of the United Mine Workers turned to the president of the American Federation of Labor and said, "Sir, you have your answer."

The miners also voted to use union funds in support of President Roosevelt's presidential campaign.

"By its endorsement, the union is allying itself with a virtuous statesman who has given to the fullest degree of his great strength, his marvelous ability and his brilliant courage to protect the common people of this country from continued exploitation by predatory financial and industrial interests," their leader said.

The convention also voted to increase Mr. Lewis' salary to \$25,000.00 a year but he refused to take it.

Out in Akron, Ohio, snow was whirling about the huge Goodyear rubber plants as strikers established picket lines in protest against two years of recurrent grievances against their employers. There had been a lengthening of hours, establishment of a company union, wage cuts, and then, finally, layoffs. A stirring speech by Mr. Lewis rallied the workers.

After five long and hard-fought weeks of sub-zero weather, during which there was an injunction against them and threats of force, the strikers won their points and were taken back to work.

To those who know that strikes can be thrilling as well as discouraging, this one had many highlights. There were the famous "sit down" stoppages, and all one night a radio station was kept clear of other broadcasts as unionists throughout the area tuned-in, prepared to rush to the scene if troops, or massed police attacked pickets at the plant.

Although many of the strikers did not know it, powerful friends of the Committee for Industrial Organization in Washington assisted in this about-face by the company. Persons influential in the Goodyear setup were told that the use of force in Akron would not help sales. There was no use manufacturing goods, it was pointed out, unless they could be sold. And if workers were killed in front of the Goodyear gates, labor men would not buy Goodyear tires or autos equipped with them.

It was made clear that the strike in Akron had not reached its highest point. The Central Labor Union was ready to call a general walkout, and other nearby unions were aroused. Thus the solidarity of the strikers and of other locals in Akron, public opinion, and the backing of powerful, nation-wide unions on the Committee for In-

dustrial Organization all played their part in the final success of the Goodyear union.

Mr. Lewis then challenged the American Federation of Labor to a referendum on vertical unionism. The American Federation of Labor and the Committee for Industrial Organization began a mad race to organize the steel industry. Arthur O. Horton, president of the International Association of Machinists announced that his union refused to contribute to the Federation campaign of organization and blamed the Industrial Committee.

"This group of malcontents in the labor movement of America has to date succeeded in getting exactly nowhere," he said.

Mr. Green sent an air mail letter to a convention of Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, declaring that the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor would aid the organization only on the condition that there was to be no interference on the part of any other group. Mr. Lewis knew this was an attack on the Industrial Committee, so he wired the council a statement. The union voted for industrial organization but declared that Mr. Lewis must not consider it his victory.

On May 23rd, the Guffey Bill was declared invalid by the Supreme Court, throwing the soft coal industry into a quandary.

Organized labor the country over roared a full-throated protest. John L. Lewis was quoted in these bitter words:

"It is a sad commentary on our form of government when every decision of the Supreme Court seems designed to fatten capital and starve and destroy labor."

William Green, on the other hand, merely said, "the decision was very disappointing."

The Supreme Court's action was heralded as another political blow for President Roosevelt. Mr. Lewis conferred with President Roosevelt on a labor platform for the Presidential campaign. It is quite probable that not only a labor plank but a future for labor in America was devised at that meeting.

Chapter Twenty

A NEW RADIO PERSONALITY

July, 1936

IT WAS FAIRLY OBVIOUS to the reading public that the heads of America's five-billion-dollar steel industry were afraid of the organ-voiced Mr. Lewis. Every utterance of their leadership betrayed their thought that he would organize a strong union and the happy days of unions controlled by the companies would be over. Smaller knuckles around the tinier of the industry's mahogany tables were set to pounding Lewis.

There were bitter attacks upon him in steel-town newspapers in which he and the labor movement were called everything distasteful. But you can safely run 100,000 volts of electricity through a human body that could be killed with 250. They overdid it.

Extravagant claims were patently absurd. Calling him "bandit and outside agitator" had no effect whatever.

But the peak of absurdity and ill-advised action came on July 1, 1936, when a full-page advertisement appeared in the country's leading newspapers, promising to protect the workingmen against changing their own minds. It must be impartially reported that no direct statement as bewildering as that was made.

"The overwhelming majority of the employees in the steel industry," the advertisement read, "recently par-

ticipated in annual elections under their own representation plan and elected their own representatives for collective bargaining.

"No employee in the steel industry has to join any organization to get or hold a job.

"The steel industry will oppose any attempt to compel its employees to join a union or pay tribute for the right to work. . . ."

Even if the American Iron and Steel Institute did speak for labor in the steel industry, a very doubtful conclusion one must inevitably say, there was John L. Lewis' side of the matter. How he answered is history. It was one of the greatest speeches ever made for the consideration of American labor, and there have been many good ones. It amply disposed of the steel barons' arguments and exposed the slate in their mental mining.

From Washington, D. C., over a nation-wide hookup, he said, in part:

"I salute the hosts of labor who listen. I greet my fellow Americans. My voice tonight will be the voice of millions of men and of women employed in America's industries, heretofore unorganized, economically exploited and inarticulate. I speak for the Committee for Industrial Organization, which has honored me with its chairmanship and with which is associated twelve great National and International Unions.

"They reflect adequately the sentiment, hopes and aspirations of those thirty million additional Americans employed in the complex processes of our domestic economy who heretofore have been denied by industry and finance the privilege of collective organization and collective participation in the arbitrary fixation of their eco-

conomic status. Let him doubt who will that tonight I portray the ceaseless yearning of their hearts and the ambitions of their minds. Let him who will, be he economic tyrant or sordid mercenary, pit his strength against this mighty upsurge of human sentiment now being crystallized in the hearts of thirty millions of workers who clamor for the establishment of industrial democracy and for participation in its tangible fruits.

"He is a mad man or a fool who believes that this river of human sentiment, flowing as it does from the hearts of these thirty millions, who with their dependents constitute two-thirds of the population of the United States of Amerira, can be dammed or impounded by the erection of arbitrary barriers of restraint. Such barriers, whether they be instrumentalities of corporate control, financial intrigue or judicial interdict, will burst asunder and inevitably destroy the pernicious forces which attempt to create them."

Here Mr. Lewis digressed to tell how the members of his own union, from the Southland to Cape Breton Island, were listening. But he underestimated.

Telephones were being brought into use in thousands of homes throughout the nation as those who had their dials set told friends about the golden voice of the labor leader. Some of them, possibly, listened mainly for the enjoyment of the tones Mr. Lewis sent over the waves. But they listened, and America had a new radio personality.

"The American Iron and Steel Institute last week published a full-page advertisement in 375 newspapers, at an estimated cost of one-half million dollars. Its purpose was to justify the outmoded labor policy of the Institute

and to announce the determination of the steel corporations to oppose the campaign now in progress for the organization of the workers in the iron and steel industry. That statement is sinister in its implications; it is designed to be terrifying to the minds of those who fail to accept the theory that the financial interests behind the steel corporations shall be regarded as the omnipresent overlord of industrial America. That statement amounts to a declaration of industrial and civil war.

"It controvenes the law! It pledges the vast resources of the industry against the right of its workers to engage in self-organization or modern collective bargaining. The announcement has fallen short of its purpose. The bolt has missed the target. Its impact upon the public is best exemplified by a statement published on July 4th from the facile pen of Mr. Walter Lippmann, famed commentator and interpreter of public events, which appeared in the columns of a New York newspaper friendly to the policies of the steel empire. Mr. Lippmann says, in part, as follows:

" 'There is a growing conviction that the steel industry is a conspicuous example of how free competition of independent management has been suppressed by private regimentation. Certainly it would be no exaggeration to say that the price structure of the steel industry during the depression has exhibited all the obvious symptoms of some sort of centralized control, that steel prices, as evidenced by their remarkable rigidity and their notable similarity, have not behaved as one would expect them to behave if supply and demand were allowed to operate in a free market. And now, on top of this, we find the American Iron and Steel Institute undertaking to formu-

late a labor policy for all the allegedly independent and competing steel plants of the country, announcing from a central point how all the managers of all these enterprises will deal with their employees.'

"The conservative *Washington Post*, published by Mr. Eugene Meyer, on July 5th, editorially said, in part, as follows:

"'Before the present tension increases, therefore, it will be well for the steel industry to realize that the public is vitally interested in the apparent intention to dictate exactly what form of organization its employees may be allowed.'

"The American Iron and Steel Institute boasts that it includes ninety-five percent of the steel production of the country and represents an associate corporate investment of \$5,000,000,000.00. This gigantic financial and industrial combination announces that its members 'are ready to employ their resources to the full' to prevent the independent organization of their employees. It controvenes the law!

"It may be admitted that the corporations associated in this Institute speak with one voice. In the so-called competitive bidding of these combinations on government contracts, it had repeatedly appeared that prices submitted were uniform even to the third decimal. The press has stated that the rejection of bids and readvertising brought the same unanimity on submitted prices. And now the Institute has undertaken to voice for its members a common policy in dealing with all workers in this industry.

"This is an issue between an industry clearly organized on its management side and the 500,000 men upon whose toil the whole structure depends. The question is whether

these men shall have freedom of organization for the purpose of protecting their interest in this colossal economic organism.

"The Institute says that it favors the right of organization among its employees without coercion from any source. What coercion can the representatives of organized labor exert upon the workers in these plants, and what appeal can they make to them except the appeal that they bring themselves within the organized labor movement for their own protection and for the common good of those who toil?"

But, continued the labor leader, "the Steel Institute does not mean to grant its employees the freedom of organization."

"The economic advantages of the employer in the steel industry," he said, "are used to provide spies so that any persons advocating anything but 'make-believe company unions' are fired.

"This coercion is finally shown in the implied threat of a blacklist which attends the announcement of a joint and common policy for all the steel corporations of this country.

"Why shouldn't organized labor throw its influence into this unequal situation? What chance have the steel workers to form a free and independent organization without the aid of organized labor?"

"These company unions are pious pretexts for denying the steel workers the right of organization. Their constitutions and by-laws are drawn by lawyers for the company. No changes can be made without the company approval. The officials are selected under company supervision. No method of independent wage negotiation is

provided. No wage contracts have in fact been made between the companies and their employees under the company union plan.

"The statement of the Institute is an open warning to representatives of recognized and firmly established labor unions that if by any legal and peaceful methods—public meetings, personal solicitations, or otherwise—they are so bold as to attempt to persuade steel workers to become members of recognized, standard labor unions, the brutal and ruthless forces of the steel oligarchy will be unloosed against them. From bitter experience we know what this means. It means that meetings of steel employees will be disrupted by thugs and hoodlums employed by the steel corporations; that the organizers themselves will be brutally beaten; that the police and judicial authorities of steel manufacturing communities, who are designated and dominated by the steel companies, will be used to arrest labor union organizers, to imprison them on false charges, to maltreat them cruelly while imprisoned and in many cases forcibly to drive them from the community.

"Moreover, it is to be emphasized that when the pronouncement of the Steel Institute states it 'fears' industrial strife and dislocations may develop, it really means that as the organizing campaign of our committee is meeting with success, the steel corporations themselves, through their private legions of armed guards, despicable under-cover spies, and agents provocateurs will deliberately provoke strife and bloodshed, and attempt to place the blame for its occurrence upon the representatives of legitimate labor."

His movement to organize the industry would be legal and peaceful, Mr. Lewis said, but he warned that he had

taken measures to protect his people. Those who incited violence would be held to a strict accountability.

"This does not mean merely the subordinate officials of the steel corporations, their armed guards, or other hirelings or mercenaries. It means that we shall hold to accountability those who are really responsible—bankers, directors and officials of the steel corporations: those who really formulate policies and methods, from J. P. Morgan and Company, which controls the United States Steel Corporation, down through other bankers, directors and officials of less powerful, but important, steel corporations, to the lowest member of the hierarchy.

"The statement of the steel industry calls attention to the fact that under their company union plans no dues are required from employees. The company pays all the expenses of these miserable subterfuges. They pay these expenses to secure an advantage over their employees. The cost of maintaining a company union is trifling, compared to the savings it affords in pay rolls. These companies assert a determination to see that their employees belong to no labor union which maintains itself by dues. Smug in their own control over all the labor within their plants, they profess to see nothing but a racket in any independent, autonomous, self-supported organization of their workers. The stake involved is not the small contribution that may be made by the employees to the union, but in the pay rolls where, on any basis of fair bargaining, millions would be added to the wage envelopes of the workers.

"This is the stake, this and the right of labor to have a voice in the fixation of its hours and working conditions, and to enter into a state of economic and civil freedom

befitting men who perform the labor in this great industry.

"Although the industry has produced thousands of millionaires, and hundreds of multi-millionaires among bankers, promoters, so-called financiers, and steel executives, it has never throughout the past thirty-five years paid a bare subsistence wage, not to mention a living wage, to the great mass of its workers.

"The industry has constantly sought to give the impression that it pays exceptionally high wages, and so far-reaching and efficient are its means of publicity that this idea is widely accepted.

"Actually, there is no basis for this belief. When comparisons are made between the earnings of workers in the steel industry and the earnings of workers in other industries of a comparable character, the standing of the steel industry is at best no more than mediocre and at worst no less than disgraceful.

"Thus, in contrast with hourly earnings of 65.6 cents in the steel industry in March, 1936, bituminous coal mining, in the same month was paying 79.3 cents; anthracite mining, 83.2 cents; petroleum producing, 77.5 cents; and building construction, 79.8 cents. These are all industries which, as regards severity of labor and working conditions, might be compared with the steel industry.

"The wages paid its common, unskilled workers is a good test of the liberality of an industry's wage policy," Mr. Lewis said.

"Put to this test," he continued, "the steel industry makes an extremely bad showing. This is made clear by the fact that with hourly earnings of 47.9 cents in March, 1936, it ranks no higher than fourteenth, and, in the

matter of weekly earnings, with \$16.77, occupies twentieth place out of the possible list of twenty-one industries for which returns are given by the National Industrial Conference Board.

"Still greater proof of the backwardness of the steel industry in its wage policy is shown by the returns of the twenty-one industries studied by the National Industrial Conference Board as to changes in actual and real weekly wages during the period, 1923-1936. In this comparison the steel industry ranks *last* both as to actual money wages and real wages.

"On the other hand, the profits of the industry have been relatively as enormous as its wage payments have been small. Greater payments have not been made to wage and salary workers because the large monopoly earnings realized have been used to pay dividends on fictitious capital stock, to add physical values in the way of plant extensions, and to multiply the machines that displace human labor.

"Under the wildest flight of imagination, what greater injury could be done to steel workers by labor unions or any other legitimate agency than is evidenced by this financial exploitation by private bankers and promoters!

"Our Committee would bring to the steel workers economic and political freedom; a living wage to those lowest in the scale of occupations, sufficient for the support of the worker and his family in health and modest comfort, and sufficient to enable him to send his children to school; to own a home and accessories; to provide against sickness, death, and the ordinary contingencies of life. In other words, a wage sufficient for him to live as an independent American citizen with hope and assurance in the future

for himself and his family. Above this basic wage, our Committee believes that differentials should be paid to other workers according to skill, training, hazard and responsibility."

There is another fundamental motive which the Committee for Industrial Organization has for unionizing the steel industry, he admitted.

"It is simple and direct. It is to protect the members of our own organizations. We know, although we are now free men and women, that so long as millions of other industrial workers are without economic and political freedom, a condition exists which is a menace to our freedom.

"No greater truth, of present-day significance, was ever stated by a President of the United States, than the declaration made by President Roosevelt in his speech at Franklin Field to the effect that America was really ruled by an economic dictatorship which must be eliminated before the democratic and economic welfare of all classes of our people can be fully realized.

"Along with the evolution and dominance in the economic affairs of the country of large corporate units engaged in the production and distribution of raw materials and manufacturing products on a national scale such as those corporations of the steel industry today, there has also concurrently developed a highly concentrated control over the money, banking, and credit facilities of the country. Its power, as the result of exhaustive congressional investigations has been shown to rest in the hands of 'a small, inner group' of New York private bankers and financiers symbolized and dominated by the New York banking house of J. P. Morgan & Co."

Acting as fiscal agents, the labor leader intoned, this banking group has been able to place its own representatives on the boards of directorship in national corporations. Once again he named the notable example of the United States Steel Corporation, where bankers control the financial and operating policies.

"Our basic financial, manufacturing, mining, transportation and utility interests have thus been brought under domination of this financial cabal," he reasoned.

"In its earlier manifestations—from the beginning of the century to the World War—this financial dictatorship was named by those who vainly but gallantly fought against it: Congressman Lindbergh, the elder La Follette, President Theodore Roosevelt, Justice Brandeis, President Wilson, Senator Norris, and a score of other crusaders for democracy and humanity, as the 'money trust,' or the 'invisible government.'

"Profiteering during the World War greatly augmented the sources and power of this group. Its corporate and political control was also greatly extended by the speculative excesses of the so-called 'New Era' of 1923-1929.

"In his inaugural address of March 4, 1933, President Roosevelt, in reviewing essential reforms, referred to the fundamental significance of this group by the declaration that the 'money changers must be driven from the temple.' The Banking and Currency Committee of the United States Senate after several years of careful investigation later reported, during the summer of 1934, that during the post-war decade this financial oligarchy had usurped 'the wealth stream of the nation to its very capillaries.'

"An economic dictatorship has thus become firmly

established in America which at the present time is focusing its efforts upon retaining the old system of finance-capitalism which was in operation before the depression and thus preventing the attainment of political and industrial democracy by the people."

"Organized labor in America accepts the challenge of the omnipresent overlords of steel to fight for the prize of economic freedom and industrial democracy. The issue involves the security of every man or woman who works for a living by hand or by brain. The issue cuts across every major economic, social and political problem now pressing with incalculable weight upon the one hundred and thirty millions of people of this nation. It is an issue of whether the working population of this country shall have a voice in determining their destiny or whether they shall serve as indentured servants for a financial and economic dictatorship which would shamelessly exploit our natural resources and debase the soul and destroy the pride of a free people."

There was a new note of liberalism in the text of labor's leader.

Times had changed and he had changed with them. People were speaking throughout the land of a social crisis and he had served time and again as the workingman's Paul Revere to muster the forces against the corpulent Red Coats of Capitalism. Not that he was against capitalism, as such. But he summed up cautiously, considering his start and the implications of his speech. He did not go "overboard," but where, indeed, had he ever?

He said:

"I call upon the workers in the iron and steel industry who are listening to me tonight to throw off their shackles

of servitude and join the union of their industry. I call upon the workers in the textile, lumber, rubber, automotive and other unorganized industries to join with their comrades in the steel industry and forge for themselves the modern instruments of labor wherewith to demand and secure participation in the increased wealth and increased productive efficiency of modern industrial America."

Though he had stolen a line from Karl Marx, he had showed remarkable restraint, all things considered. As he put it, in conclusion:

"I unhesitatingly place the values represented by thirty million human beings engaged in industry and their sixty million dependents as being above and superior in every moral consideration to the five billions of inanimate dollars represented by the resources of the American Iron and Steel Institute or to the additional billions of inanimate dollars that perforce may be allied with the empire of steel in the impending struggle which the Institute, in the brutality of its arrogance, seeks to make inevitable."

That was the speech, and the forces that it set off will be heard round the world.

Chapter Twenty-one

WELDING A NEW POWER

August–November, 1936

NINE OLD MEN IN SOMBER ROBES, the Supreme Court of the United States, who may constitute the greatest stumbling block in the history of American sociological progress or prove the most effective rationalizing agency, had made a tombstone out of the Guffey Bill, a possible milestone of labor progress. There remained the Wagner Bill but the legal umpires were yet to match it with the Constitution.

John L. Lewis knew that the coal industry must go back on the old schedule of haphazard production; without stabilization in the industry the operators in the South, where the union is tender, would chisel on wage scales. The United Mine Workers would face a strike at the expiration of the contract next spring and Mr. Lewis knew he would be back on the dizzying but not-so-merry-go-round, that vicious coal cycle. This is one of the reasons he wished to organize all of labor on the industrial basis, beginning with the steel industry. He knew that if any segment of American labor allowed itself to be treated as a commodity, the rest of labor would suffer. The issue was often compared to that of slavery. Whether you thought the abolitionists or the planter was the tyrant depended on your sociological views and vision.

Friends of Mr. Lewis pointed out that whether you

believe monolithic unionism, such as he suggested, or monolithic anti-unionism to be the villain of the piece depended upon the same thing. But one has to drive the other out.

Mr. Lewis found himself in the unique position of the farmer who was forced to inoculate the cattle of other agriculturists for miles around in order to protect his own. This would be a big job, this organization of America's 30,000,000 workers. Merely organizing steel employees seemed an impossible task, and had proved a Waterloo for hundreds of good men.

"It is inconceivable that you intend to sit with the women under an awning on the hilltop, while the steel workers in the valley struggle in the dust and agony of industrial warfare," wrote John L. Lewis to William Green.

Mr. Green replied with a new attack on industrial objectives, and said the issue was one of democracy and of dual unionism.

Now there was another enemy with whom to engage in forensic jousts, young Senator Rush D. Holt of West Virginia whom Mr. Lewis blamed for the sinking of the reconstructed coal stabilization bill in the last Congress.

The Committee for Industrial Organization had grown. It was an informal group consisting of the presidents of thirteen labor unions, representing approximately 1,500,000 workers. These men headed the United Mine Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the United Textile Workers, the International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers, the International Typographical Union, the Amalgamated Association of

Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, the United Rubber Workers, the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, the Cap and Millinery Department of the United Hatters, of the Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, and the Federation of Flat Glass Workers.

Within a short time Heywood Broun, president of the American Newspaper Guild, which had a membership of 6,000, also joined the Committee. Neither the typographers nor the newspapermen had voted on the question of joining the Committee for Industrial Organization and Max Zaritsky of the United Hatters was not the leader of an autonomous union but the head of a department within the international union.

The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor ordered the heads of ten of these organizations to stand trial for insurrection. Mr. Lewis would not retreat. He was pursuing an idea in which he felt a deep conviction of wisdom and righteousness because it was so largely his own. The union leaders who supported him were the strongest men in the organized labor movement. They knew if President William Green of the American Federation of Labor suspended one-third of the Federation's membership, primarily to oust them at the next convention, his administration must take the responsibility for the most serious split ever known in labor ranks and the possible breakup of the Federation. So they refused to stand trial.

Along with its avowed policy, the Committee for Industrial Organization had inaugurated Labor's Non-Partisan League. While old-style unionists shuddered, Major George L. Berry, Sidney Hillman and Mr. Lewis told Washington labor correspondents on July 15th that the

organization had decided to perpetuate its existence beyond its support of President Roosevelt.

It looked for a realignment of political forces before 1940 and wanted to lead them. Already, in New York State, the League was backing a pure labor ticket.

"I am not a Republican, I am not a Democrat, I am not a Fascist, a Communist, nor a Socialist," Mr. Lewis told the world through the news-hawks. "I am for labor and I will go with anyone who will work with me in this cause."

A few days later he led the list of labor chieftains who criticized the acceptance speech of the Republican nominee for the Presidency, Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas. The speech favored company unions, according to Mr. Lewis.

"This little man out at Topeka, Kansas, has no more idea or conception of what ails America or what to do about it than a goat herder in the hills of Bulgaria," the labor leader said quietly, and a little sadly.

"A vote for Roosevelt is a vote for Lewis" was the slogan adopted by both men's enemies. Before a convention of the Montana Bankers' Association in Yellowstone Park, Phillip C. Hanna, Chicago editor, said:

"Mr. Lewis and the Roosevelt administration made a horse trade in which Lewis agreed to support Roosevelt this year in return for the President's support for the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1940."

The possibility that they were engaged in action greatly to be regretted later, that they might be goading a future President of the United States who could really emancipate labor, did not deter the Old Guard. The announcement that the Industrial Committee did not plan to engage

in anything but securing new dues-paying members for the Federation did not stay their hand.

Acting as a judge and jury, with one of its henchmen as the prosecutor, fourteen members of the Executive Council of the Federation of Labor voted thirteen to one on August 15th to precipitate revolution in the ranks of organized labor and to suspend ten of the members of the Committee for Industrial Organization unless the group disbanded within a month. Two of the cooperating unions, the Cap and Millinery Workers, and the International Typographical Union, were not mentioned in the suspension order because their membership had not formally joined the "insurgent committee."

At this very extraordinary trial, where the defendants failed to appear and the decision was written in advance, an erudite student of economics, John P. Frey, acted both as complainant and prosecutor. In the course of an exceedingly wordy day he likened John L. Lewis to a violent Italian scene. In the miners' leader he professed to see a menacing Mussolini and a man who "like a volcano spits flame and burning lava, spreading poisonous gases over the countryside." Charles P. Howard of the typographers, largely a conservative union, he branded a modern Machiavelli.

He went on and on, and in the course of it he damned the Industrial Committee as an organized insurrection and forever dismissed the possibility of a compromise with the Federation. Sweltering in the Washington heat were the ministerial Mr. Green, twelve of the Federation's fifteen vice-presidents and Secretary-Treasurer Frank Morrison. In the assemblage were men who looked upon Mr. Lewis with the same distaste that a night club proprietor has for

bloomers on chorus girls. It was a twentieth-century reproduction of the infamous witch trials of the Middle Ages.

There was Matthew Woll of the Photo Engravers, dressed as though posing for a nineteenth-century print; bland John Coefield, master of the Plumbers; the belligerent G. M. Bugniazet, whose Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was the terror of scabs in the building industry; Teamster Dan Tobin, whose owl-eyes blinked behind powerful spectacles, head of the Labor Division of the Democratic National Committee; big, broad-chested William L. Hutcheson of the Carpenters, head of the Labor Division of the Republican National Committee, who once called Mr. Lewis a vile name and lived to regret it. Also present were: Frank Duffy of the Carpenters, a vice-president of the Federation; trim Harry C. Bates of the Bricklayers; impressive appearing Edward J. Gainor of the Letter Carriers; Tom Rickert of the United Garment Workers; William D. Mahon of the Street and Electric Railway Employees; and Felix H. Knight of the Railway Carmen.

Now in view of the solidity of the craft opposition to all that Mr. Lewis stood for in industrial alignment there may be some speculation in the reader's mind as to the identity of the single person who voted against suspension. It was smiling, crafty David Dubinsky, shrewd, aggressive leader of the International Ladies Garment Workers, itself a member of the Industrial Committee. Mr. Dubinsky, who fully appreciated the implications of a cleavage of labor forces, begged the solemn-faced judges to defer action until the annual convention in November.

He assured them that the Committee for Industrial

Organization members would yield to the rule of a majority, even though a two-thirds vote was necessary to suspend, but all his efforts failed. Pending final action in November, the members of all unions remaining with the Industrial Organization Committee after September 5, 1936, would be excommunicated, reducing the membership of the Federation from 3,500,000 to about 2,000,000.

Meanwhile the unions which accepted the leadership of John L. Lewis pledged \$500,000 for the organization drive. One of the first projects was to extend an invitation to the 600,000 laborers organized in independent unions throughout the nation to affiliate with the Committee.

The first real drive, however, was against the hitherto impregnable strongholds of the steel industry, while organizers were sent to the workers in automobile factories and money and men were sent to unite forces of the laborers in electric plants. The focal point of action was the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, with headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Tall, gray-haired Clinton S. Golden, once a representative of the National Labor Relations Board, was made Pittsburgh Regional Director of the Committee's drive on steel. Mr. Golden sent his organizers out quietly along the flat shores of Lake Michigan and into the valleys of the Monongahela. They were instructed to search out former members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers of North America, men who naturally were interested in the labor movement, to form the nucleus of this new drive.

The Amalgamated had been the dominant steel union since 1876, and strangely enough, already possessed practically an industrial charter. In the 1880's it was a power-

ful union but its forces were crushed at the Homestead, Pennsylvania, battle of 1892. Since that, the pages of its history were filled with the markings of a rubber stamp spelling out "defeat." The organization's leader, Michael Francis Tighe, had been an officer of the Steel Workers Union through nearly every trouncing at the hands of employers. In October, 1935, the union represented only 8,600 out of the 450,000 men in the industry.

From time to time, John L. Lewis renewed his offer to support any effective move that William Green might be contemplating in the steel industry, if it were to be along industrial lines and in conjunction with the Lewis Committee. The offer included trained organizers and \$500,000.00 in cash. Mr. Green's answer was always negative.

"Alas, poor Green, I knew him well," quoth Mr. Lewis. Then he added that Mr. Green probably wished him to join in a policy of fluttering procrastination, the while moaning "O Tempora, o Mores."

Technically the new members who flocked, 75,000 strong in the first few months, became members of the Amalgamated Union but the Committee for Industrial Organization was running the show. The Lewis organization executed everything except the actual issuance of charters. The Organizing Committee kept all dues, one dollar a month from each member, and even had power to deal with steel companies towards effecting agreements. Philip Murray, one of the men who built the United Mine Workers of America to its present position as the most important union in the Northern Hemisphere, was made chief of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. The services of Thomas Kennedy, Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, were often requested and always given

whenever organizers encountered opposition in Pennsylvania towns. Some of these communities had never seen a union banner, but when company guards seemed threatening, state police would suddenly appear on the scene and all was harmony. This example of a labor-elected official aiding organization with the protection of the law, demonstrated powerfully to Mr. Lewis the efficacy of political action to secure labor's ends.

Mr. Murray immediately began an exhaustive study of the entire steel industry, preparing for the day when he could argue with the employers and anticipate the presentation of their case. Under the leaders were 150 full-time organizers, none of whom was paid more than \$10.00 a day. They set up headquarters in various steel towns, signed men into the union, sending the membership cards to the Pittsburgh office quickly in order to circumvent spies developing an employers' blacklist of names.

Meetings were held in thousands of little halls and the names of Mr. Lewis and President Roosevelt were always received with cheers. It made the men feel better to hear the speaker intimate that their defender, John L. Lewis, often ran out around the corner to have a chat with the President of the United States. Then, too, more than \$300,000.00 was spent in the first few months of organization.

The company union idea, which owners entered into with such enthusiasm during the early days of the National Industrial Recovery Act, proved now to be a boomerang. It turned out that these pampered unions had accomplished education work in unionization which the Industrial Committee would otherwise have had to do. Company leaders, pressed by their membership to seek a remedy for unfavor-

able working conditions, had made requests of management which had been refused and then had called upon the Committee for Industrial Organization for help. More than 1,000 such company union representatives joined the Amalgamated Association. Two of the largest puppet labor groups joined the Committee *en toto*, with more than 10,000 men.

Naturally all of these factors upset the golf playing of the stockholders of steel. At the beginning of the campaign the American Iron and Steel Institute bought at least \$200,000.00 worth of advertising space to urge the workers to think twice before signing anything. John L. Lewis was called a communist and a racketeer whenever the steel operators chose to prod the editors of small steel town newspapers.

The steel leaders asserted that the Industrial Committee was a group of outside agitators and that no outsiders could horn into their business. They added that most of their men did not want to organize under any leadership, whatsoever. And, indeed, if the steel drive had been organized along conventional American Federation of Labor lines and only the highly paid steel workers solicited for membership, the attitude of the conservative workers' spokesmen would have been indicative of the outcome. But the unionization drive included even the lowest paid workers, some of whom had nothing to lose.

By granting a few concessions, such as time and a half pay for overtime work, and short vacations with pay for a certain class of workers, the steel barons fought back. Another weapon used was the ancient spy system, with the O.G.P.U. being pressed into service as whisperers to bring glad tidings of a rumored increase in wages for all.

The Steel Workers Organizers Committee, however, proceeded with twentieth-century scientific methods, prepared for a long fight. They established a legal department which concentrated on research, investigating legal aspects of cases sure to come up later. Cracking city ordinances and those that prohibit union activities was another subject of study. Lee Pressman, who once was counsel to Harry Hopkin's W.P.A., led the department. He set out to change the traditional attitude of the law bolstering the cause of property owners.

Now all this activity, led by John L. Lewis, did not pull the cheesecloth over Senator Rush D. Holt's eyes. He charged Mr. Lewis with the heinous crime of seeking to become a candidate for the Presidency.

"Lewis is not interested in the miners," said the bespectacled senator. "He is interested only in gaining power for himself because he wants to be President of the United States. Lewis thinks he is presidential timber."

But as he sailed for Europe on August 14th, Mr. Lewis predicted the re-election of President Roosevelt.

Various state Federations of Labor were split as council after council attempted to persuade their followers to join them in a bolt to John L. Lewis' Committee. Meanwhile some of the largest steel corporations began to receive demands from the new unions.

William L. Hutcheson, leader of the Carpenters, Lewis' implacable foe, joined the Republican National Committee's Labor Division to spread the doctrine that "a vote for Roosevelt is a vote for Lewis."

The old guard oligarchy was quoted in bitter attacks upon the Industrial Committee chairman.

"I would rather see the whole labor movement go

under and myself in hell than have John L. Lewis get away with it," fumed Arthur Wharton, president of the Machinists.

Mr. Green came out for President Roosevelt, smilingly, but a few hours later put forth a timid qualification. He explained that his vote was a personal thing and did not mean that the Federation had made an endorsement.

On September 3rd, Michael F. Tighe resigned as president of the Amalgamated Association of Steel and Tin Workers, thus paving the way for closer harmony in the steel unionization drive. David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, announced his resignation from the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor. At that moment forty-eight city labor bodies, including those in many large cities had voiced opposition to the suspension of the Committee for Industrial Organization unions and announced that they would not oust any delegate representing them.

Mr. Lewis returned from his European holiday just before the suspension order was to become effective on September 6th. "One can only hope that the Executive Council members are prepared to accept the responsibility for their action," he said. "The only crime of which we are accused is an attempt to organize workers and make them members of the American Federation of Labor. If that be treason let Mr. Green make the most of it."

The mine leader was met at the dock by Senator Guffey, with whom he was to confer on political matters in Pennsylvania. Both men predicted President Roosevelt would carry Pennsylvania by 250,000 votes although the state is normally Republican.

When the suspension order became effective on Septem-

ber 6th, Mr. Lewis characterized it as an act "of incredible and crass stupidity, dictated by personal selfishness and frantic fear." Other labor leaders said it was an "eviction from the house of labor, a great crime against the working class."

On Labor Day, Mr. Green, vying with the dynamic leader of the insurgents for labor's ear, was broadcasting a message at Knoxville, Tennessee, as Mr. Lewis went over the air waves from a studio in Washington.

Mr. Green said that the American Federation of Labor had apparently not committed itself to participate in the formation of an independent labor party in 1940. And of labor's insistence on freedom, he said:

"Labor must be free in the complete and full meaning of that term. It cannot and must not be the ward of a paternalistic government. This form of freedom comprehends the exercise of the right to bargain collectively and to accept or reject proffered wage standards."

Mr. Lewis defended the thesis that labor must organize to cope with highly organized employers. Corporations, he said, control all the country's invested wealth. He argued that they were hostile to labor and pointed to the iron and steel institution's resistance to his efforts to organize their workers.

Toilers of America were not receiving their share of the returns of industry, he said, charging that twenty-one percent of all the families in the nation had incomes of less than \$1,000.00 per year. Corporation managements challenged the laws, manning their plants with armed thugs and slinking spies, even sending these "hardened emissaries into the homes of workers to terrorize the wives and break the manhood of the husband."

Able economists have shown, he continued, that the entire scope of American life: social, economic, physical and spiritual, may be vastly improved.

"Under proper planning and regulation of American industry, after generous returns had been distributed to invested capital, employers could easily pay a minimum income to unskilled labor of at least \$2,500.00 a year," he said.

He proposed the thirty-hour week, which he said would be sufficiently long to achieve labor's goal. He warned proponents of reaction to take heed.

"Let the leaders of finance and corporate industries prepare to concede the rightful privileges of a free people," he said. "Let the workers organize. Let them assemble, let their crystallized voices proclaim their injustices and demand their privileges."

Just as on many another issue, the Federation split over its quadrennial political survey. Mr. Hutcheson, of the Carpenters, resigned as a vice-president and a member of the Executive Council when the report supported President Roosevelt. It was a very torn Federation which prepared to convene in Florida.

The announcement was another victory for John L. Lewis. It consolidated labor's ranks politically behind the President, upon whose election the mine leader had staked so much.

In a radio speech on October 17th, he warned the electors of a Fascist State if Mr. Landon were elected. He showered invective upon "the perfidious Mr. (Alfred) Smith," and the du Pont group, saying they sought a centralized control of money, natural and material resources, and of the people.

"They would establish an economic and financial dictatorship; they would denude and exploit the many to enrich the few," went the powerful voice down the air lanes. "Their plans are equivalent to setting up a Fascist State. They would place in the seat of power a quavering, quaggy dummy.

"They dream too much. They forget the power of the people when aroused or enraged.

"If we are forced into depression again, the plutocrats and the Bourbons of this country will find themselves confronted by the long repressed anguish and the unloosed anger of a mighty people.

"There must be industrial democracy in this nation, if this nation is to survive in its present form."

Did he mean revolution? Fighting in the streets like that of European nations? The implied threat was there that something *must* be done, and that industrial democracy had better be granted as far the lesser of two inroads upon the old guard capitalists.

In the succeeding days he told reporters that the Industrial Organization Committee members might not even bother to pay railroad fare to the Tampa, Florida, convention of the American Federation of Labor. Other labor leaders intimated that the Federation's action in suspending the C.I.O. unions was one of fear, saying that with the 75,000 newly organized members, plus a possible 275,000 of the members of the Federation which Mr. Lewis had not yet asked to follow him, the president of the United Mine Workers of America might have faced the delegates and secured ratification of a general industrial unionization drive.

Mr. Green began to show the effects of a psychology of

defeat, feeling inferior to his former chief and realizing that the nation was looking upon the contest as a struggle of contending leadership.

Emissaries of President Roosevelt tried to bring the two factions together before the Presidential election. At the beginning of November, 1936, the Committee for Industrial Organization laid plans to raise another \$500,000.00 towards mass organization of American labor.

Chapter Twenty-two

AN IMPARTIAL APPRAISAL

Time: the Present

LET US SHRINK THIS GIANT John L. Lewis to test tube size, seat him within a glass cage, and while he still growls and rumbles, chewing a massive cigar and twisting it from side to side in characteristic fashion, we shall try to examine his future. There he sits, an orator to match Bryan, an ego as nicely balanced as that of Mussolini, and the physical stamina of a heavyweight champion.

He darkens with rage as we point our pencils at the side of the little cage and exclaim over his Americanism, which is truer than that of William Randolph Hearst, while matching it in fervor. We note that he has the personal charm of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the dash of the late Senator Huey P. Long.

He is the world's foremost catch-as-catch-can opportunist. While he has no Napoleonic fixation, he knows he has a place in the sun and he will try to reach it. Whatever he attempts will be carried out with his full belief in it. Though he never vacillates, he can reverse himself as quickly as an expert ice skater.

His record and his speeches are contradictory. Times change and John L. Lewis changes with them. He does not fit in any political category, which is the reason he is politically important. If he is to become the father of that long overdue Colossus, the American Labor Party, it will

be because he has never espoused a cause that was not labor's.

Though he occasionally baits a communist or so, perhaps just to seem consistent, he is now a hero to many a radical. He accepts their united-front aid because he says "it's a good idea to work with any one who will work with you." Some of them still enrage him when they attempt to supply him with a political formula, using red carbon paper faintly aromatic of vodka. He will have none of that.

"I would be with Lewis in this fight for industrial unionism even if I did not like him; in fact, even if I did not trust him," said John Brophy, his former bitter enemy, now his unionization artilleryman on the industrial fighting line. "His mere program is enough for me. But you know I am sold on him today.

"After he put me in this job, he asked me, 'Well, John, who timed this thing right, you or I?' And I had to say, 'I guess *you* did, John.' And that's just it. He is a genius in timing."

Which is a true appreciation of one of his outstanding qualities. He adopts and adapts and discards.

"He is so damned intelligent and fearless it is a pleasure to work with him. When he accepts a position, he accepts it in its entirety. He understands those implications as a whole. To that degree he is a good theorist," Mr. Brophy concluded.

Mr. Lewis is and ever has been one of the best rough-and-tumble debaters in this country, too. His vituperation is lavish and his eloquent outpourings from the speaker's platform can be both stimulating and goading. His oratory is effulgent and so flowery with archaisms that the simple miners are often bemused, as well as overpowered.

All the native lyricism and powerful, moving eloquence

of his Welsh background reach full bloom when he faces the audience. And the larger the audience, the greater his satisfaction. He delights in exploding and rolling out his syllables, a quality which sometimes carries him away in the heat of private talk with a friend.

His words are his tools and it is as though he wielded a familiar pick with all his strength to hew away the stubbornness of his opponents. You will remember the phrases he coins, although at times he waxes ungrammatical and again perhaps pontifical.

Not a little of John L. Lewis' effectiveness in any gathering is due to his appearance. Today, at fifty-six, he has every semblance of the man who once knocked down a mule. He has a right arm like an ordinary man's right leg. His hands are strong and big, while his massive head overshadows the whole of his sinewy hulk. From the corner of a dim meeting hall it makes a picture, as though cleft from some stratum of native mineral rock. Shaggy eyebrows perpetually lower over his deep-set eyes, which are the color of slate except when smouldering in the heat of some declamation. A heavy, shaggy mane of hair which has all the red, black and grayish hues of an oxide ore, contributes to the dynamic appearance of this miner who has become so much more and who is still, proudly, a miner.

Although it has been a quarter of a century since the labor leader has had a pick in his hand and despite the fact that he is growing a trifle thick about the middle, Mr. Lewis is a formidable opponent in any clash of strength. He is as agile and swift as a cat and thinks nothing of doing a standing jump to the top of a chair, a trick he often uses to astound an audience.

Forty years of battle have only whetted his taste for combat. There was the time, for instance, when Forney

Johnston, a fiery gentleman from Alabama, was interrupted in the midst of an oration by Mr. Lewis, who said that if Alabama wanted to secede again the Mine Workers would furnish twenty army divisions to help bring the state back into the union of states. Finally Johnston offered to step outside and fight it out.

"How charming!" purred Mr. Lewis. "How novel! But I am afraid it would not add to the gaiety of nations or settle the problem in hand." Then he rasped out: "The problem in hand is this. Fifteen thousand men, their wives and their children are starving in the state of Alabama. It makes no difference what Mr. Johnston or I say or do. Their agony speaks louder."

For all his combativeness, John L. Lewis has seldom delivered an uninvited blow, and then only on behalf of labor or in some private quarrel. Despite the fireworks which characterize his oratory, he is assuredly one of the most self-controlled and purposeful of men. Like the great white bulldog which is his companion at home, the man is an anomaly of power and placidity. And you always know where you stand with him: there isn't a subtlety in his entire makeup.

On first examination you could be led into the wrong conclusion that Mr. Lewis is primarily anxious only to hold onto his \$12,000.00-a-year job. He likes to live luxuriously. He goes to Europe now and then and at home in a rented manor which was built in Revolutionary days, he surrounds himself with the best of everything. His big Cadillac automobile is driven by a chauffeur whose uniform would match that of any driver for a Fifth Avenue dowager.

Actually, though, the comforts he gets from the office mean little to him compared with the power.

He is a model husband and father. He is a genial host. His son, John, Jr., attends Woodberry Forest School, in Virginia. His daughter, Kathryn, is her father's secretary. He lunches mostly at his desk, often dines alone, and in the evenings drives back to his comfortable home. He drinks conservatively and rarely. He rides few hobbies.

One of them is revealing, however. He enjoys attending the lectures of reactionaries, sitting as near to the speaker as he can get. Then he tilts his massive head and scowls at their feet. It is very disconcerting to the defender of the old order of things.

He is still somewhat dictatorial. Those who sit down with him to work out a problem generally find they are doing it his way. His high-handedness throughout the years has caused much grumbling from the rank-and-file. He fought with Frank Farrington, and threw him out of the organization. Farrington is a broken old man today. The same is true of Alexander Howat. It would be true of Brophy and the others, if they had not come to his way of thinking, or he to theirs. But when he came to their philosophies it was all in his own time.

His dictatorship was displayed in the recent miners' convention in Washington, when 1700 delegates representing his nearly half-million union men upheld with practical unanimity his autocratic rulings. One delegate arose on the floor and said: "I want to go on record . . ." And Mr. Lewis boomed: "If you want to go on record, write it on a slip of paper and hand it to the secretary. Next business."

In his defense, however, it might be said that the United Mine Workers of America is, and always has been, shot through with anarchy. Many miners cannot tell where democracy leaves off and absolute lack of government sets

in. Since the organization would be powerless unless it acted as a unit, its national leaders must exercise a certain degree of tyranny.

Mr. Lewis never denied this or begged pardon for his manner of doing things. At a recent American Federation of Labor convention, Mr. Tobin of the teamsters peered out from behind his spectacles to remark that Mr. Lewis was a dictator of sorts.

"The miners are not apologizing for the provisions of their constitution to Dan Tobin or any one else," came the reply. "We give him the right to run his organization, in any way he wants, and we understand he runs it. Frankly and confidentially, we do the same."

This was a clear statement of the facts. There are those who shout that in six of the nine miners' elections since 1920 the name of Lewis was the only one on the ballot. In another instance, John Brophy made a serious charge of fraud against him. Others still believe today that Mr. Lewis got Frank Hayes drunk in order to climb into the driver's seat of the Mine Workers. Mr. Hayes always denied this, however, and one should credit him with knowing.

In the face of all this fact and fiction the people of the United States have had occasion to read many diverse opinions concerning the future of the man. William Randolph Hearst, who distrusts anyone with a beard or needing a hair cut, since they then remind him of Russia, and who can see red in a bottle of bluing, believes Mr. Lewis will unite with the communists for a united front Farmer-Labor Party in 1940.

Dorothy Thompson, a columnist, sees communism or the Italian corporate state growing out of the Labor Non-

Partisan League, and in her vision, lo and behold, there is Mr. Lewis riding a fine white horse at the head of some great assemblage or other.

During the early days of the National Industrial Recovery Act, General Hugh S. Johnson and other White House spokesmen clearly indicated that they believed Mr. Lewis was the most dependable man in the labor movement. The President has shown that he believes labor's demand for a larger share of the rewards of industry are just, and that Mr. Lewis is on the right track in organizing a massive front of workers in order that the capitalists shall not be constantly harassed by conflicting demands.

Other disturbed newspaper commentators see the political action of labor as a crystallization of class war. However Heywood Broun, who is not giving any columns away, has allowed the author to quote him as follows:

"Of course, it is anybody's guess. But it seems to me that the political and economic history of America in the next ten years will be largely written in terms of the success or failure of John L. Lewis."

He added that he did not believe any powerful farmer-labor group would be in the field by 1940, but said that if it was, John L. Lewis would be the key individual.

"Strong industrial unions will prevent Fascism in this country," said Sinclair Lewis, the "It-Can't-Happen-Here" man. "It is inevitable that the Committee for Industrial Organization will do to the American Federation of Labor what the Federation did to the Knights of Labor. The industrial union solution is the only one. Both that Mr. Lewis and this one agree upon that. He is going places."

Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes sees the industrial movement

succeeding and becoming an instrument of great potential good, politically. Wall Street newspapers view it with alarm and say it must be communist-controlled.

Labor leaders in the industrial committee are optimistic that with the re-election of President Roosevelt through the support of organized labor he will help to organize a powerful Labor Party and support Mr. Lewis for the Presidency when the time is propitious. Their opinions are admittedly biased, but there is enough truth in the proposition to worry the captains of industry, who put up huge sums to defeat the smiling Mr. Roosevelt.

General Hugh S. Johnson, now a columnist, has said from time to time that he believes Mr. Lewis will never become a Lenin or a Hitler. The general, who has had a good opportunity to study the leader of labor, says he is a practical idealist, fighting for what he thinks is right.

The late Senator Huey P. Long, who was mistakenly branded a legislative clown, appreciated the potential force that is John L. Lewis. He once told this author, "Old Huey thinks this John L. will be the most powerful man in America unless I get there first."

The Senator said that any one who knew Mr. Lewis trusted him.

"But if he tries and fails and things gets worse, and God knows and He only how bad these grab-it-all boys can make things, then there may be a revolt, always excepting the fact that old Huey might get in there and make things better.

"There ain't an ounce of foreignism in him, but he may be forced to become the second George Washington in this land. See what I mean? I mean there is enough Tories here, God damn them, to cause anything. Huey sees that

if things gets worse why somebody is going to have to tromp on the Mellon and the Morgan, the twin bed mates of disaster.

"And old John L. could do it. They tell me he fights moving locomotives in the early morning just to warm up. He's the Huey Long of labor. That's what he is, the Huey Long of labor."

Which, coming from the Louisiana Senator, was not only a compliment but a miracle. For labor unions sought in a different way to secure a division of the wealth, which aim Mr. Long believed should belong to him, just as Damon Runyon claims ownership of the present tense as a form of writing, and any one who uses that tense is lifting Mr. Runyon's style.

"Reasonable folks is against some people taking all and others getting little in a land of plenty," Senator Long continued. "That's why it has got to be either Long or Lewis to help them. Sometimes I'm sure old Huey's way is the more peaceable. Anyway there is going to be Hell to pay when he gets going."

The Senator believed that Mr. Lewis was mentioned somewhere in the scriptures and he promised to look it up, but never got around to it.

Hundreds of laborers who have been interviewed believe Mr. Lewis is the God of the laboring man. There were some who thought that he was either the best leader who ever turned up or a racketeer. Clarence Irwin, one of the rank-and-file chieftains in the Youngstown steel area, has gone so far as to say that the miner is leading the irrepressible conflict of the twentieth century.

Every person who has gone on record concerning Mr. Lewis has demonstrated this fact: no one takes him lightly.

While under our present system of capitalistic enterprise an individual's reflections upon the future of the labor leader must be predicated, perhaps unconsciously, upon that person's reaction to his immediate position in life, there are a few general conclusions, again, which seem reasonable. The question goes much further than whether Mr. Green or Mr. Lewis shall dominate organized labor.

If Mr. Lewis is successful in the industrial organization of what looks to be possibly five or ten millions of laborers, the destiny of an entire social order is at stake.

I believe he will be successful and I believe he will change American standards.

The present struggle is not as yet a movement to destroy or to supplant capitalism. Unless John L. Lewis is superseded in the leadership of the organization it is very unlikely that we shall be asked or forced to turn to another socio-economic setup. This is clearly an attempt to secure prosperity and security for the workingman within the capitalistic system and by the use of democratic means. John L. Lewis has not changed from the man who said, "All of America's ills could be remedied by a return to the principles of the founding fathers, as expressed in the great documents of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."

However, it is obvious to an increasing number of people that adequate purchasing power must be assured, not merely restored, to the majority of Americans. We must have the return of a comfortable margin of the proceeds of industrialism to the worker, who is the small consumer. If he cannot buy goods the factories will not run.

Mr. Lewis will not attempt to predict his future. He will say only that he believes the full force of labor should

be felt in whatever ways democracy affords. He has dedicated himself to the battle. He hates greed but he does not as yet believe capitalism is hopelessly greedy.

He is fully aware, however, that the overwhelming majority of corporation executives still subscribe to the philosophies which have nearly brought the nation to ruin, time after time, and which killed the N.I.R.A. and other attempts to aid labor. And he knows, too, that these men are just as impregnably opposed to sharing the social income as they were in 1929. The only way out is to vote these fellows into the background, he believes.

He would like to be President of the United States. He has repeatedly turned down Republican offers of cabinet positions. Just before the last Republican convention he was approached on the possibility of becoming the nominee for the Vice-Presidency. But the Republican Party, as constituted in 1936, does not have the labor principles which he desires.

But what, you say, if 1940 finds conservatives in full command of both parties in opposition to "radicalism," which is the old guard synonym for the demand of a fair return to labor? While it seems unlikely, do not put entirely out of mind the possibility that Mr. Lewis will then use more vehement and practical means to secure his ends. Pragmatist that he is, Mr. Lewis is rather a master of events than a slave to any ephemeral theory. So he can be very dangerous if his hand is forced. If he ever turned into a General Coxey, an improbable supposition, there would be no compromise. Beyond that there is a reasonable doubt that he himself knows exactly what he would do.

The prospect of leading perhaps 30,000,000 voters does not frighten him. It would seem to be far enough in the

future for him to get set for it, in any event. He refuses to borrow troubles from the heavy thinkers, although he admits that the right of all workers to control their conditions of labor is a great deal of power for them to have.

In the immediate future he has much to gain by supporting Mr. Roosevelt. It is a certainty that he will never "sell out" his following for the pound of flesh that is a cabinet job. In return for this aid President Roosevelt must help John L. Lewis to control the labor movement and to bring more liberal laws, dedicated to the emancipation of labor.

Because of the conservative slant of laborers in America, the Labor Party here should be considerably more effective than the British Labor Party ever has been for England. It seems true that with the full power of labor massed, politically *and economically*, which is only what entrenched wealth has been doing for many years, Mr. Lewis can force regulations upon industry through control of the government. It will make some sort of a dictator out of John L. Lewis, but it will be democracy, perhaps a truer form than we have ever known. It may be a form of governmental unionism.

Now that shifting difficulties force him to take a position cheek-to-cheek with a hybrid crew in the economic tug-of-war, Mr. Lewis is not strongly anti-anybody. He has learned to hide his oral acids in behalf of a cause. The irons of social consciousness are in the fire, ready for the sure, steady blows which will re-shape things. He is not the scowling mine Mussolini of ten years ago, even though he has not yet learned to smile for the photographers.

His movement will gain impetus from the La Guardias, the La Follettes, the Wheelers and the Costigans of the

land. The agrarians, too, are going to seek the leadership of a progressive soon, and while it is improbable that farmers will ever be organized, even under the C.I.O., their political support may be secured.

One possible pitfall looms. The suggestion has been made that the Labor Party could gain control of the Democratic Party within a few years, with the support of Mr. Roosevelt. But it must be recalled that many a smaller group with a burning issue has been engulfed in the friendly and all too clutching arms of the major parties. It is the opinion of many labor leaders that if this issue comes up it may wreck the movement. They feel it would be far better to retain the Labor Party name and single objectives.

Mr. Lewis may be forced to re-adapt himself later on; but he is a human gyroscope. Turn him completely around, tilt him slightly, blindfold him with loyalty ties, he still will seek and find a rational level, just as the stabilizer of the great ocean liner will.

American labor could hardly govern more mistakenly than the bankers have, he believes. Already the industrial movement has thrown to the front a corps of rank-and-file leaders who are clear-headed and wary, who have an eye to the future. They hope to produce in actuality that which now exists only in theory: a government in America by the majority of Americans.

They know that there is more and more a compelling feeling that if we believe in democracy we should give the country back to the mass of toilers, or give it back to the Indians.



Keystone Photo.

THIS RARE OLD PICTURE SHOWS JOHN L. LEWIS AS HE FIRST EMERGED UPON
THE NATIONAL SCENE AS SAMUEL GOMPERS' FAVORITE ORGANIZER.



Soibelman Photo.

A TRIUMPHANT TRIUMPHANT IN THE EARLY DAYS. FRANK MORRISON, SECRETARY OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR,
JOHN L. LEWIS, AND SAMUEL GOMPERS, FATHER OF CRAFT UNIONISM AND PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION.



Altman Photo.

"STOP DEMANDING AND DEMURRING," THE GRAPE-VINE TELEGRAPH SAID. HERE ARE THOMAS F. BREWSTER, PRESIDENT OF THE COAL OPERATORS' ASSOCIATION, SECRETARY OF LABOR WILLIAM B. WILSON, AND MR. LEWIS. THE EXPRESSION OF EACH MAN SHOWS HIS FEELING ABOUT THE CONFERENCES.



Keystone Photo.

AN ACE PICTURE FOR NEWSPAPER FILES OF THE 1920'S. FOR JOHN L. LEWIS, JOHN HAY'S HAMMOND, CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL COAL COMMISSION, AND THOMAS R. MARSHALL, ANOTHER MEMBER, CONFERRED MANY TIMES OVER EVER-THREATENING COAL STRIKES.



Acme Photo.

MRS. LEWIS SAILS WITH HER HUSBAND, FEBRUARY 24, 1923, ON THE S.S. CELTIC. HE PLANNED A SIX-WEEK TOUR OF EUROPEAN COAL FIELDS. THERE IS NO TRACE OF THE DETECTIVES SENT BY OPERATORS TO CHECK ON MR. LEWIS' MOVES WHILE ABROAD. THEY SHOWED UP LATER, HOWEVER.



A. I. Taylor Photo.

WITH HIS TWO CHILDREN, KATHRYN AND JOHN L. JR., MR. LEWIS TAKES A FEW MINUTES ON THE SANDS AT ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., WHILE THE ANTHRACITE COAL CONFERENCE WAS GOING ON. AN ENTERPRISING PRESS AGENT TOOK THE PICTURE.



Keystone Photo.

IN AN ELECTION TO BE DECIDED BY NEWSPAPERMEN JOHN L. LEWIS COULD WIN, EVERY TIME. HERE HE IS TELLING WHITE HOUSE REPORTERS HOW THE MINERS MUST STRIKE UNLESS THE OPERATORS "COME ACROSS WITH MORE MONEY FOR MY PEOPLE."



Bretzman Photo.

THIS PORTRAIT OF JOHN L. LEWIS SHOWS HIM AT THE DECLINE
OF HIS FORTUNES, IN 1932.



Altman Photo.

FOUR YEARS LATER. MANY MORE VICTORIES, MANY MORE SCALPS HANGING
ON HIS BELT, BUT HIS OWN HAIR IS MUCH GRAYER, TOO.



Keystone Photo.

AS MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LEFT THE WHITE HOUSE, FEBRUARY 11, 1935, LABOR WAS ASSURED THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS. IN THE FIRST ROW ARE MATTHEW WOLL, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION; MR. LEWIS, WILLIAM GREEN, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION; EDWARD MCGRADY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR, AND FRANK MORRISON, SECRETARY OF THE FEDERATION.



Acme Photo.

AFTER ANOTHER WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE, ALL FRIENDS NOW, ARE DONALD RICHBERG, N.I.R.A. ADMINISTRATOR; SIDNEY HILLMAN, MEMBER OF THE N.I.R.A. CONSUMERS' ADVISORY BOARD AND HEAD OF THE CLOTHING WORKERS; WILLIAM GREEN, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR, AND MR. LEWIS.



SHOWN AT NEW YORK'S MADISON SQUARE GARDEN LABOR RALLY, MAY 23, 1935, ARE MRS. ANNA ROSENBERG, THEN STATE N. I. R. A. DIRECTOR; JOSEPH RYAN, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, AND ONE OF NEW YORK'S MOST POWERFUL LABOR LEADERS; WILLIAM GREEN, SIDNEY HILLMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS, AND MR. LEWIS.



Acme Photo.

A NEW RADIO PERSONALITY, BUT SPEAKING OVER A LOUD SPEAKER WITH
THE MICROPHONE IN THE BACKGROUND. MR. LEWIS IN ACTION!



Keystone Photo.

SENATOR GUFFEY, CO-AUTHOR OF THE COAL BILL BEARING HIS NAME; D. C. KENNEDY, REPRESENTING COAL OPERATORS; MAJOR GEORGE L. BERRY, REPRESENTING THE GOVERNMENT; MR. LEWIS, AND REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER, CO-AUTHOR OF THE COAL INDUSTRY STABILIZATION BILL LATER RULED OUT BY THE SUPREME COURT, SNAPPED AS THEY LEFT THE WHITE HOUSE, JUNE 14, 1935, AFTER A CONFERENCE DESIGNED TO SOLVE A THREATENED STRIKE IN THE COAL FIELDS.



Keystone Photo.

ONLY AN AISLE BETWEEN THEM, PHYSICALLY, BUT A WORLD OF DIFFERENCES. JOHN L. LEWIS LOOKS STRAIGHT AHEAD, RESOLUTELY, WHILE MR. GREEN COULD BE ENTICED TO LOOK BEHIND HIM, SATISFIED WITH CRAFT UNIONISM. THE PICTURE WAS UNPOSED, TAKEN AT THE INDUSTRIAL RECOVERY CONFERENCE, DECEMBER 9, 1935.



Acme Photo.

AS LABOR'S NON-PARTISAN LEAGUE WAS BORN IN WASHINGTON, SMILING, ASTUTE DAVID DUBINSKY, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION, MR. LEWIS AND LUIGI ANTONINI, HEAD OF THE ITALIAN BRANCH OF THE GARMENT WORKERS, POSE. MR. LEWIS DOES NOT SMILE FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHERS—YET.

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